Ahead of the Hounds

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A Story of Today

BY

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AHEAD OF THE HOUNDS.

CHAPTER I.

It was growing light in the east that July morning when John Martindale locked the front door of the lonely old cottage which had been his home for five years—five long years of ardent study and daily hand-to-hand combat with poverty.

Though poor, John was by education and inherited tendencies both honorable and accurate. He hung up the door key high on the nail which he had driven for that purpose, for he was going away, forever. The landlord would have no trouble finding the key. John had been an ideal tenant. He held in his hand a grip, small and much faded and worn. Over his shoulder was his rolled blanket, as soldiers carry theirs when marching. He was going out in the world, poor, friendless and youthful. He was an orphan, who had recently buried his mother, his last known relative. There was supposed to be a half-brother somewhere in the wide, unknown world. To search for him was the object of John Martindale's travels. A needle in the hay mow were easier to find.

He had a long march before him; an all-summer campaign, if not a journey of a lifetime. He walked

fast, with the light, springy steps of ardent, hopeful youth, like one who knows where he is going and is eager to reach his destination.

In Ann Arbor John had one intimate friend, Professor Broadmind. He had been a college chum of John's father, the late Colonel Martindale, also a comrade and brother officer in the same regiment. John loved Professor Broadmind, perhaps for the reason that the professor first loved him. It pleased the poetic, imaginative boy to hear the professor tell of the noble, unselfish deeds done by the gallant colonel, who died when John was 11 years old.

John had graduated in June at the University of Michigan. Without property or the ties of kindred, he was free to obey his mother's dying request; the request that he should go out into the world and find his half-brother, Hugh Martindale—his only living kinsman, and he might not be living. It was merely a chance, a possibility. It had been ten long, sad years since they had heard from Hugh Martindale. However, John was young, hopeful and enthusiastic. Moreover, he was a poet, with lofty ideals and a broad and strong imagination. With a light heart and a fleet foot John was starting out on his pilgrimage. He was going to walk, to tramp, being too poor to pay railway fare.

When he reached the home of Professor Broadmind the sun was up and shining on the dew-damp verdure. The professor, who was an early riser, was out in his garden. When he saw John coming, in such an unusual outfit, he came out to meet him, saying: "Good

morning, John. You are out tramping sooner than I expected."

"Yes," John answered, with youthful self-sufficiency. "I have started to walk to California. I am going to find my half-brother, Hugh. You knew his mother, long before you saw my mother."

"Oh, yes; I knew Hugh's mother. She was a Princeton belle—a beautiful woman, but not gentle, sweet and spiritual, like your lovable mother. I presume you half-brothers will be as unlike as your mothers. Let me see; Hugh must be over thirty. How time does slip away. It seems but yesterday that I fell from my horse, bleeding and fainting. It was at Gettysburg. I gave myself up for dead. I can even now see your father as he came, jumped from his horse, lifting me, wounded and helpless, upon the saddle, and leading the spirited horse, with its burden, back to the hospital tents. I shall not forget that day. Your father saved my life at the double risk of his own. I have tried many ways to do something for you and your delicate mother, but you seemed queer, or proud, and would receive nothing but kind words and a few old books for your use."

"We had mother's pension," answered John, with sturdy pride. "We could live on that, at least. It was all we had and we made it stretch out thin. It sufficed."

"Now you have decided to go; in fact have started, on foot, too, with little money and less experience, to find a brother whose address is unknown and existence uncertain," said the professor, in tones of

great disapproval. "John, I have no patience with such folly. I am your friend. I will find you a situation, where you can earn money and then reach California before you can walk there. It is far and you are not used to walking."

"I understand and admit," replied John, unmoved. "Nevertheless, I am going. If I fail it will not be because I hesitated."

"But you are a scholar, a born gentleman; you have genius; you are an original, radical thinker; you have written the finest poems ever written by any student in the university. I protest against your turning tramp. It is folly, madness, preposterous rashness. It is scandalous. It is a mock and an insult to your instructors, a shame put upon our methods and a disgrace to the whole university."

"Do not blame me too much," pleaded John, sadly, "for I must go, and go now, and go as I am going."

"You will be forced to beg. You will become a vagrant and be arrested and sentenced to work in the chain gang, with hoboes and criminals," continued the professor, with scornful warmth.

"I intend to ask fraternal assistance," declared John, with decided assurance.

"Do you know what it is to be hungry, starving and begging bread?"

"No, but I am going to know," exclaimed John, with the faith of youth and the confidence of a novice.

"I can tell you what it is to beg bread. It is to be driven from door to door with cruel, cutting refusals. It is to sleep by the roadside without supper; to be

arrested in the morning because you have no money to buy your breakfast. It is to be fined because your pocket is as empty as your stomach. It is to be sent to jail because you are unable to pay this humane and fraternal fine. It is to work in the chain gang, without pay; to teach you to conceal your utter destitution and encourage you to become a criminal. No, John, son of my friend, you must not do this. I will get you a pass or buy you a ticket to California and wait for the money till you become a famous writer."

"No; I am going now. I could not wait an hour. If you wish to do me a favor then get something to mark my mother's grave. That is my only regret, that I cannot buy her a gravestone.

"I will do this for you—not only for your sake, but because I owe it to your father."

"You are kind and I really do thank you for your interest in my welfare. I did try to work and earn a little more money. I have nearly four dollars, but I have no heart nor interest in mere money-getting. I want a change, some new sensations to drive off my morbid melancholy. Mother understood this and told me to go and search for Hugh."

"You will find plenty of new sensations if you tramp through to California, begging your rations," added the professor, with infinite disgust. "You have kept too much by yourself. You should have made friends among the students and gone out in society."

"Society," said John, bitterly. "Indeed, I was a fine candidate for social functions. I never had any clothes but my school suit. I washed and ironed

my own shirts, as well as made them. That I studied and persisted was to please mother. That I stood first in my classes was fore the same reason. I, myself, have no desire, no ambition, to stand above or beyond any living person. That I graduated with honors was the last pleasure that I was permitted to give her. Somehow mother seemed to think if I graduated at the university with honors I certainly must and would amount to some great thing. As became the son of Colonel Martindale, I consented to study, thinking perhaps it would better fit me for my life work among the poor and fallen outcasts of our social failure. I never hoped, wished nor desired to better my own personal condition. Did Christ labor to improve his own condition or the condition of others? He went down among the poor workers to learn their life and their conditions. He worked with them, suffered and died for them. I, who am his follower, must do the same. I must complete my education where I can learn the things I must know; before I write I must understand my subject. In imagination I must be in harmony with my themes."

"Ephraim is joined to his idols. Let him alone," laughed the professor, reproachfully. "Your father had some of your Utopian ideas, but when he lost his ancestral home through the knavery of a man whom he had aided and defended then he began to have a little more respect for respectable people and popular methods and let the unfortunates look out for themselves."

"What! Do you mean to tell me that my father

turned his back on the poor and mentally weak just because he lost his property?"

"Oh, no; not exactly that. They turned their backs on him when he had nothing more to tempt their cunning cupidity. He died broken-hearted. He was sorely disappointed in humanity. The real throttled his ideal and this grieved him."

"Poor father! I remember he was always sad after we lost our fortune, but that would not disturb me. I am glad to have no property to hold me anywhere. I am free, even if I am a begging pilgrim, like any other son of the highway."

"John, I have no patience with such foolishness," declared the professor with the utmost scorn. "It is social suicide and political anarchy. When once you get among strangers, ragged, dirty, moneyless and altogether disreputable, you could not get a district school to teach. No; not even if you had the knowledge of Humboldt or the wisdom of Solomon. Renounce this insane freak; earn money and advertise for your lost brother."

"No; I must do this. It is part of my education to know life and men at their worst, as well as at their best."

"We are told," remarked the professor, pointedly, "that experience teaches a dear school. You seem to be one of the students bent on taking a full course in that some old school. But come in. Have some breakfast while I write you a letter of introduction to Judson Rush of Los Angeles. He will help you find your brother and help you in many ways to get a

situation, or study law in his office. Moreover, I will write him to be on the lookout for a tramping Homer, blinder than a bat to his own interests; a genius clothed in rags and begging bread."

CHAPTER II.

He who grapples with himself finds a hard, merciless antagonist. Self-combat and self-conquest try the strength of our will power. John knew himself, his weakness and his strength. He had fought with himself, long and often, always victorious, yet never discouraged nor yielding. He continued the conflict with renewed vigor.

After leaving his beloved professor he assailed himself, doubting and debating the course he was pursuing. Did his mother desire him to start out without money to walk to California? Alas for poor John Martindale; his reason answered "no." Then why was he doing this thing? Was it madness, as the professor had said? Was it obstinacy, laziness or a reckless love of adventure?

When he analyzed his motives he was forced to admit that they were not above criticism. Still, if he were doing wrong he alone would suffer, since there were none dependent on him. He was only one little erring unit in the great sum of human existence.

He walked fast, like one who is preoccupied or laboring under some great excitement. He looked backward but once. Then he took off his hat and looked long and mournfully toward the place where his mother slep in her unmarked grave. There were

tears in his eyes—tears of real, manly anguish. Soon he turned sadly away and walked faster than before. The truth is this. John Martindale was overwrought by hard study and mental strain, together with work, care, nursing his sick mother and the utter despair and loneliness of his bereavement. He was doing the one thing left open for his poverty and spiritual unrest. The utterly destitute have little choice—madness, suicide or the highways.

John chose the latter as the lesser evil. Besides he persuaded himself it was the one thing needed to round out his sympathies with universal humanity. To see, to feel, to hear is to know. To suffer is to understand suffering. To tramp, to beg, to hunger is to get down to the bed rock of social misery. The groaning, writhing of the submerged "tenth," who can feel for them who never felt that awful, crushing, grinding pressure from the laughing, joyous multitudes standing on their prostrate, tortured bodies? John was right. Instinct is always right. He must go down among those who weep and suffer. He must taste the bitterness which they are forced to drink. He was confirmed that he was doing his manly, fraternal duty. Moreover, he was possessed by the American spirit of progress and unrest. He had a desire to go and to investigate.

That California was far away gave it an added charm. That his brother was there made the quest like the old crusades—a religious duty. He thought often of the good old knights, undaunted by time, distance, dangers and bodily suffering. What was he,

John Martindale, to hesitate, waver and weakly turn back? Never. While the highway was free and open hunger might torment and jails retard, but they should not overwhelm nor intimidate. He would find his brother. Of this he had an abiding faith. Others might doubt. He did not. Hence his courage was sustained by faith. The dim, unknown future was coming up sweet and smiling—beautiful as a poet's dream. The present counted as nothing; it was the future that was glowing with dazzling radiance.

John walked all day. He was too excited to heed the July heat, the dust or his protesting feet. Once he stopped by a shady well to drink and eat the lunch given him by the professor's thoughtful wife.

Toward evening he grew weary and hungry, so much so that he decided to seek food and shelter. He stopped at a neat little farmhouse and asked, without shame, if they could give him something to eat.

The farmer's wife looked at him in a pitying, motherly, yielding way. She saw a pale, slender young man, almost a boy, handsome as Adonis, with angelic brown eyes, a dimpled, sad-smiling face, sweet and innocent as a guileless babe. She then glanced at his clothes; they were cheap, ill-fitting and threadbare. He wore an outing flannel shirt and tie of the same, both made by his own hands. He looked what he was—a good young man who was poor. He might be a genius, a poet or reformer. He certainly was neither wicked nor selfish.

Looking him over, after the manner of country

women, she answered him in a cheerful voice: "Yes, indeed. You can have supper with us and welcome. Come in and have a seat. Supper is almost ready."

She brought out another plate, making some quick improvements, as though some honored guest had arrived unexpectedly. John watched her flying through the room, cooking, straining milk, guiding and controlling six hungry, vigorous children. With all this work and care, she seemed content, happy and interested in her rural duties. Bright-eyed and robust, to her life meant labor and sacrifice for others. She was not pining for the ideal or the unattainable. She was simply and humbly doing what her hands found to do. This gave her pleasure and unfailing happiness.

When supper was ready she placed a chair to her right, inviting John to a seat beside her. She was a mother. She thought of the possible future of her own sons.

After supper the farmer asked John if he smoked. John was most emphatic, if not scornful, in his negative answer. "Well, then, if that is so you can sleep on the hay in my barn. But no man who smokes sleeps in my barn with my consent."

John thanked him, taking his grip and blanket went to the barn. He spread out his blanket on the new-mown hay and slept the sleep of youthful weariness. In the morning John awoke early, folded his blanket and went out to the stock well, making his toilet with the care and exactitude of a refined mother's boy.

The farmer was up and through milking. He called out to John, saying: "Come in and have a snack before starting." John needed no second invitation, for he had already achieved an appetite that would do credit to a hired man.

Warm cream biscuits, poached eggs and fresh butter disappeared as if by magic. Such appetites and such abundance would have scandalized a city breakfast table. John followed the family example. He was a credit to the tramping brotherhood of hunger. He put in his work with willingness and speed. Even the fat-faced urchins stared in admiration. Such knife and fork dexterity astonished and invited imitation. They were slow and somewhat awkward, but John never wavered or hesitated. There were no mistakes nor clumsy blunderings. Smooth, graceful and expeditious, like the work of an expert. No wonder the rural aspirants gazed in admiring astonishment.

After the onslaught of the breakfast campaign John resumed his westward march. He was in good spirits, pleased with the world and with himself. He even fancied his journey to the coast would be like a summer picnic, long drawn out. But Michigan is not all the country; neither are all farmers hospitable, nor fraternal. In all his future experiences that one first night stood out bright, blessed and solitary.

The next night he slept in his blanket beside an old stack bottom and breakfasted on dry, stale bread and skimmed milk, given sparingly, if not grudgingly. Nevertheless, he continued to ask for food whenever

he was "ahungered." This he did without shame or embarrassment. How one of his delicate, sensitive nature could do this is explained by his belief in the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. The children of one father—God—were brethren and therefore in duty bound to assist one another; this was his social theory. It worked well so far as he himself was doing the work, but when others were the doers or acting agents then the theory did not work so well. There seemed to be a hitch and a break, if not an utter failure. The combination would work if the worker started with the right phrase, "Our father in heaven"; but the great and overweening majority have a theory beginning with, "me and myself" and ending with "devil take the hindmost." Hence John and his theory were not in harmony with the social majority.

Inasmuch as his theory was sufficient for himself, he felt no shame or sense of degradation in begging nor asking bread from his more fortunate brethren. Moreover, to refuse such simple assistance, what sin, what infamy, what recreancy! John, in his applied Christianity, thought and firmly believed that it would be a pleasure to the more fortunate to aid and assist him in his need, or unavoidable destitution. Poor, simple John Martindale. He had much to learn, though a university graduate.

However, while walking through Michigan, the state made famous by the fraternal labors of a Pingree, he never once suffered from hunger. Neither did he want in northern Indiana. Sometimes he was kindly

refused food for some domestic reason, such as not having anything cooked or just given the last bread to some other hungry wayfarer, but no direct insults, rebuffs or refusals. In his journeying men often offered him a seat in their wagons. This helped him onward and rested his feet. Once when it was raining he bought a ticket and rode on the cars; but he was careful and ceased to indulge in such expensive luxuries. He bought the ticket as that permitted him to wait in the station out of the rain.

But when John reached Chicago an unspoken, unwritten change in sentiments and language of the people forced itself upon his notice, a change that it is charity to pass over in silence. Notwithstanding certain nameless things, he did not utterly lose heart. A hungry man is not prone nor predisposed to see beauty in tall buildings, nor in a selfish, vain, lavish display of wealth. His hunger is aggravated rather than allayed.

Furthermore, his feet were blistered, bleeding and so painful it was agony to walk. His hunger, added to the torment of his blistered feet, made walking through the Garden state a horror never to be forgotten.

Illinois, rich and beautiful in the July sun, took little note of beggars like John Martindale. His hunger, if concealed by silence, was his own concern, his own affair. His blistered feet were free to smart and swell and travel on, but to ask for bread, for aid, for fraternal succor, that was quite another question. John even ceased to ask permission to sleep in barns.

He went stealthily into groves or around haystacks, avoiding the habitations of men. It was a sad condition of things—"Ahungered and gave me not meat, naked and clother me not, a stranger and took me not in"—the old crucial test of righteousness, true yesterday, to-day and forever.

John wondered if he were indeed a fool. Why could he not see and understand life and society like the great and ruling majority. Why was he so made and endowed that living near Christ meant living like Christ, our dear brother, who had not where to lay his devoted head? John was troubled, not so much for himself as for the proud, rich and merciless.

His shoes had to be mended; three times he bought bread. His money was going, little by little. He was growing discouraged, if not despondent.

Some days he took off his shoes, put them in his blanket and walked on with bare feet, wetting them at every stream and watering trough. The fine dust adhering gave him some relief. But his feet were tender and unused to such naked tramping. Besides the osage hedge thorns lay in wait by the shady pathways. Everywhere he found thorns, thistles and nettles ready to add to his tormenting hunger. He was growing nervous.

One evening in the fleeting twilight as John was hurrying through a town, hungry and heartsick, he saw a long west-bound freight train standing on the siding, waiting for the Overland to pass. Instantly, with the instinct of a footsore tramp, he began his quick, sly inspection. He was looking and seeking

for some way to continue his journey and rest his afflicted feet. With a thrill of unutterably joy he saw an empty car, a dirty cattle car, with one door partially open. In mingled hope and fear he watched the vigilant brakeman. At length a favorable moment came. John jumped up into the empty car. His heart seemed to rise up into his parched and starving throat. He breathed fast and audibly. He stood pressing hard against the side of the car, as if to flatten himself out to invisible thinness. He chose his position about half way between the opening and the end of the car. Erect and trembling, he listened with throbbing heart and whirling brain. No one came near. He was not discovered. Still, he trembled like one in a chill, from weakness, hunger and intense excitement.

The Overland came and went. The long freight train pulled slowly out and was soon moving westward at full speed. John dropped down to the floor in the attitude of prayer. His thankfulness was overpowering. That he was riding in a foul, uncleaned cattle car was as nothing. The ride itself was enough, without asking in addition for the odors of the orient.

There was some soiled prairie hay on the floor and a large pile of loose new-mown hay near where John stood. Even then he wondered at that pile of clean hay. Nevertheless he appropriated it thankfully. He spread out his blanket, wrapped himself in it and prepared for a comfortable night's rest. But the discomforts of hunger, augmented by the burning pains in his blistered feet and the jarring, bumping, grind-

ing of the cars made sleep impossible. Joy and the excitement of going on rapidly toward California at length soothed the gnawings of hunger, the fire of thirst and the agony of blistered, lacerated feet. He slept with a conscience as silent and unreproaching as that of an infant. He could not understand that he was wronging any one by riding in that empty car without pay or permit. He did not think he was robbing any person or corporation. He had no antagonism nor malice toward any corporation because of their past records nor their present methods. He had never thought nor studied these things. His only thought was that he was riding—riding under present conditions was a good thing, a veritable godsend. He even went further in his unconventional ethics. He fancied that it pleased God to see one of his poor, suffering sons put an empty car to such righteous use. So differently do men think! So differently do circumstances lead men to reason from the same data.

On, on went the creaking, roaring, rushing, clanking train. John was awakened by steps on top of his car. He thought himself lost, or, more correctly, found—discovered; but the footfalls passed on and over and were heard no more.

About midnight the train stopped at a watering tank. John did not guess that the car door had been left ajar by design, for a purpose. When the train stopped he sprang to his feet with startled alertness, flattening his form against the darkened side of the car. Soon he felt sure he was, indeed, discovered;

that some dire and terrible vengeance was lurking around the partially open door. He heard many stealthy steps and hoarse, suggestive whispers. Even shadowy heads flitted across the opening. His imagination peopled the darkness with vengeful brakemen and merciless conductors. He was in a nervous tremor, not so much from cowardice as from the horrible phantoms conjured up by his too active fancy. The climax came when a man sprung through the opening into the darkened car. Then some bundles were tossed lightly in through the opening, followed by crouching forms of gliding blackness. Prudence kept John silent and motionless. With the courage of desperation he waited the consummation of some awful tragedy. Six times forms of hideous outlines had darkened the opening. Then there came a head-like shadow, shoving some heavy packages through the opening. To John's excited imagination all these forms of mystery were for his punishment or forcible eviction. He thought of the terrible White Caps, the Ku-Klux and the Vigilants and trembled. Again he imagined it was some new and demoniac method to intimidate or mutilate tramps, some cruel and unusual chastisement, designed and carried out in the interest of capital.

The distorted head at the opening was speaking, in suppressed, screeching whispers, saying: "Boys, here is a five-gallon can of water. It must last you, for now I must close the door. Keep mum when the cars stop; don't smoke at stations nor light matches in the night, for the light will flash out through the cracks

and light up the weeds; be careful and doubly cautious. By-bye." He drew the door almost shut, but it stuck and defied his single-handed efforts. The crack was an inch wide, if not more.

At first the car seemed black with darkness. John dropped softly and slowly down on his blanket and listened to their whispered remarks. Could they be tramps, like himself, or were they a gang of murderous train robbers? Whoever or whatever they were, one thing was certain, they were preparing to remain in the car. This seemed worse than any phantom which his imagination had pictured. They were groping around, whispering orders and suggestions. They found the pile of hay and were spreading it out and settling down for an all-night's journey.

Soon the long train was in motion; then the car seemed filled with voices, strained, excited, discordant and muffled. The men grew exultant, if not hilarious. Their mirth was suppressed and their laugh smothered and constrained. Jokes, boasts, slang and profanity deluged the already reeking car. Some were eating and drinking in the darkness. They passed food around by sense of feeling. John silently held out his hands in the darkness. Some one gave him a biscuit sandwich.

After eating some of the men groped their way to the car corners, where they lighted their pipes, screening the lighted matches with their crouching bodies. In the flashes of light John caught glimpses of the six men. They were not the ideal or ordinary tramps. They were well-built, fine-featured Ameri-

cans, neither stupid, old nor strikingly ragged. They might be toughs, but never paupers.

John did not speak. The darkness concealed him and he was willing to remain unknown. If they touched him they merely thought him one of their number. He was soon convinced that they were, like himself, beating their way across the continent. They were not saints nor unselfish social reformers. He inferred they belonged to the opposition.

One voice was gloating and boasting of some brilliant feat of "swiping," which filled his tones with rapture. Another was relating some personal tale wherein he had deceived the confiding and sympathetic public by his pretended filial sorrow—a dying mother, a moneyless, loving son, unable to reach her bedside in time to gladden her dying eyes and receive the maternal blessing—thereby just scooping in the dimes and nickels.

A third vaunted his success with pretty waiter girls and amorous old cooks, who filled his market baskets with choice "handouts." As a collector of prime "handouts" he claimed the belt, the national championship.

Then there arose a whispered clamor: "Where is the Unterrified?" "Hello, there, Unterrified; are you here?" "I am here," replied a voice which John had not before noticed. It gave him a strange thrill, as of familiar music, long unheard. The voice was low, calm and masterful.

"Where is your big lunch basket?" demanded the clamorers with greedy solicitude.

"Oh, it is here, all right," answered the Unterrified, coolly. "A whole clothes basket, crammed full; enough to last a week. My friend working in the eating house made a clean sweep of everything eatable—boiled ham, tongue, roast beef, pigs' feet, meat pies, tripe, cakes, bread, buns and all the fixings, too numerous to mention."

"Bully for you," the others whispered, in hoarse shouts, while the voice of the Unterrified continued: "But won't the dailies to-morrow have a new sensation—the looting of the eating house on Sorgum avenue. The long-suffering public will be warned to look out for the all-devouring burglar, who swallows hams at a gulp and bread according."

Again the listeners cheered the Unterrified in hoarse stomach tones of whispered hurrahs.

Before long the conversation grew less forcible, gradually shading off down to silence. The men were apparently sleeping, for snoring could be heard above the roar of the train. John himself was sleepy. He felt assured that the men were not after him. They had their own affairs, whatever they might be, without meddling with him; besides, they had plenty of food, which was reassuring. He had eaten one of their sandwiches and was less annoyed by hunger. He was sure they would give him more in the morning. He was even tempted to crawl over and help himself, but resisted the sore temptation. Ere long he, too, was sleeping.

He slept till the morning light entered the openings and made the sleepers visible. John rose up to a

sitting posture and, looking over toward where the voice of the Unterrified had been heard, he saw there a strong-featured man, well if not faultlessly dressed, who was looking at him with incredible wonder. When he saw John was awake he crept softly over to him, saying in a friendly voice: "Say, boy, who are you? How did you come here? How long have you been riding in this old barnyard?"

John straightened up with youthful dignity, as he replied, loftily: "I am a university graduate, walking to the coast. My feet are blistered and very painful. I jumped up in this car last evening to ride as far as they will let me."

"Where are you going when you reach the coast?" asked the Unterrified, not without interest.

"To Los Angeles, to try and find my brother."

"When did you lose this brother?" inquired the Unterrified, with mocking solicitude.

"We lost all trace of him more than ten years ago. I remember him well as a handsome, daring young man, full of the spirit of American push and enterprise. He was in Los Angeles when we last heard of him, in railroad employ."

"Los Angeles," repeated the Unterrified, with increasing interest. "I am well acquainted in that city. Perhaps I know him. What is his name?"

"Hugh Martindale," replied John, concisely.

At that name the Unterrified recoiled as if struck by a blow. But he slapped his head, saying, sharply: "Those cursed blackflies; they bite worse than a bee stings. I finished one of their breed that time, any-

how. So Hugh Martindale is your straying brother. I know him well. Have met him hundreds of times in and around Los Angeles. In fact, we are quite chums. He is not one bit like you. He is large and well-proportioned; in a word, an athlete, a reckless sort of a dare-devil; nothing bad about him, only he is not your style; not like you in the least. You look equal to writing spring poetry and playing on a fiddle," remarked the Unterrified, with small admiration for such unmanly accomplishments.

John Martindale blushed till the crimson was glowing even in the dimly lighted car, but he made no reply. Nothing abashed, the Unterrified continued: "So you, too, are beating the old corporation out of a fare. Here, give me your hand. Any one who will steal a ride is my brother."

John put out his slender, girlish hand calmly, if not coldly. Nevertheless, the Unterrified grasped it heartily and pressed it vigorously, if not passionately, whispering, eagerly: "Now we are brothers indeed. What do you say to joining our order, the Lilies of Solomon? Our brotherhood is increasing, if not flourishing in high places. I will tell you all about the order some time; but now I want to hear more about your brother, Hugh Martindale. The one I know may not be the brother you are seeking. Why do you wish to find him? The Hugh Martindale I know is as poor as a church mouse," said the Unterrified, positively.

"His poverty will make no difference with me. I am as poor as he is. I seek him because he is my

only living blood kinsman. My mother's dying words were: 'Go and find Hugh.' "

"Then you are an orphan," murmured the Unterrified, as he turned away his head to fix the hay which they were using as a seat.

"Yes," answered John sadly. "Mother died last month. Father died nearly ten years ago. He was failing when he wrote to Hugh to come home and see him. Hugh came. I remember how grand and manly he looked. I can tell you this brother of mine is a fine, noble man, a brother to be proud of. He was the handsomest man I ever saw. At least this is my boyish estimate of character and personal appearance."

"Well, now, boy, look here. He may have changed greatly in ten years," remarked the Unterrified, without passion or emotion.

"I should know him at a glance," remarked John, with the utmost positiveness.

"You think so," continued the Unterrified, in a slow, drawling voice. "Now, the Hugh Martindale that I know is a common-loooking, no-account sort of a fellow, so he can't be your 'noble brother.' "

"No, indeed, he cannot be my brother," exclaimed John, with increasing warmth. "My brother was uncommonly bright, brilliant and gifted—almost a genius. Father and mother thought him a most promising and capable young man. They expected great things of him. He seemed so quick and understood everything at a glance."

"Doubtless he is a remarkable young man. All

absent brothers are. Perhaps he had some lofty hopes and notions of your genius and ability."

"I trust so," replied John, with much tenderness, "for I loved him almost to adoration."

"Now this is growing interesting," laughed the Unterrified, decisively. "A lost brother, who may be poor, and still adored. Certainly I must and will help you find such a roving treasure. In the meantime let us have something to eat. I have plenty and to spare. Then while you are eating I will tell you who and what I am—a sort of contrast to your handsome and promising, lost and lamented brother."

"I am awful thirsty," said John, simply. "Can I have a drink first?"

"Of course. Here is the bottle my friend gave me for just such emergencies," passing a small flask of ruby-colored liquid toward John in genial haste.

"No, no; not that. I want water. That is whisky. I never tasted whisky in my life," exclaimed John, with great repugnance.

"Oh, this is not whisky, my girl-faced brother. This is good French brandy, made in California; good to have along in case of sickness."

"You called me girl-faced. That is what Hugh always called me. He would say: "Come, my girl-faced Johnny; come and do this or that."

"Quite a remarkable coincidence," remarked the Unterrified, carelessly. "Say, what have you in that old grip there; lots of good things?" continued the Unterrified, quizzingly.

"No," answered John, quietly; "nothing but a change of underwear and some toilet articles."

"Bet a nickel," said the Unterrified, "I can tell you every article of your toilet service; a razor, tooth-brush, hand mirror and a manicure set."

"How could you guess so accurately?"

"In two ways; by looking at you and by looking into the old grip itself, which I did while you were asleep this morning. I see you have printed your name on the old thing. At least I infer 'John Martindale' stands for your name. But come, let us eat before the others rouse up."

He drew the great basket over by John, handing him a knife and fork, telling him to help himself to everything or anything he liked, while he went to the water can and poured out a cup of water, which he handed to John.

They commenced eating without hesitation or ceremony. John was almost starving and needed no urging nor second invitation.

The Unterrified looked at John more than he ate. At least he talked much, telling John of his past life. He said: "Now, I will tell you who and what I am. It may not interest you much, as it is the record of a failure; an utter collapse of all worldly ambition. I am known from the Atlantic to the Pacific as the 'Unterrified.' Why I am so called is another story. I go by this name. I answer to no other. I want no other. I was once an engineer, but in an hour of unselfish, fraternal sacrifice I joined a strike in the interest of the other boys—a sympathetic strike.

Now I am blacklisted, a tramp, a hunted, blacklisted jailbird. From sixteen jobs the base minions of the soulless corporation have hunted me down and caused my immediate discharge. My last job—the last one I ever will take—was driving a swill cart. Just think of it; an engineer driving a swill cart and not permitted by the malice of wealth and power to do even that drudgery! Yes; they followed me out to that swill wagon and had me discharged that very night. That finished the business for me. I was done and through forever with work and wages. It took a long time to get it through my conceited head that I was anything but a slave, a mean, whipped cringing, whining, groveling slave. But when I once got it through my thick skull something dropped. I went on a strike in good earnest—a life-long strike, a strike that counts, the strike of a lifetime. I joined the Brotherhood of the Lilies of Solomon, who toil not, neither do they spin. I took their ironclad, terrible oath never to do another stroke of productive work willingly nor for hire during my natural life. So far no Lily of Solomon has ever broken his awful vows. None dare break them. The doom is too appalling. For one, I have kept my vows as sacred as ever did Knight Templar. I live and live well, how and by what means, that is the concern of law and society. They supinely allowed and encouraged that band of high-toned robbers to hunt me down and debar me from earning an honest living by honest labor. Now, if they came to me on their bended knees, offering me my old position, I would not take

it. Law and society made war on me. I return the fire. Self-defense is my plea—the plea of universal nature. You need not look so horrified. Wait till you have had my experience; then you will understand my position. Our Brotherhood is larger than the world thinks. Why should we toil and moil, sweat and sow, that another may reap and loll in idleness? Boy, do you understand the full sweep, scope and spirit of their tramp and vagrancy laws? I can tell you what those laws are. They are the new fugitive slave laws, the wage slaves' fugitive laws, to hold or remand the workers back to servitude. The exploiters of labor, who are on top, driving the world to the great and final consummation, are both blind and mad. The destruction of the world has been foretold and the scarlet-coated soldiers of the destroyer are preparing the fire and the fuel."

"And you ask me to join your order?" said John, in wide-eyed horror and astonishment.

"I merely asked you to join us," answered the Unterrified, with stoic coolness. "There is no compulsion. I belong to the propaganda. I pass around flowers—the lilies. But look here, boy, you can eat; no mistake about that. You better go slow. When did you eat your last square meal?"

"Not since I left northern Indiana, about a week ago. Still, I was not really starving. I often was given dry bits of bread. Day before yesterday I had two cold baked potatoes. The day before that I had a large piece of moldy corn bread. Of course I would get quite hungry. At such times I ate raw corn

dropped in the road by farmers who were hauling ear corn to market. I always had an earn of corn in my pocket. So you see I was not starving. Only it was not like this tongue and gingerbread. Corn is not bad when you get used to chewing the kernels."

"Heavens, boy, you have been having a time of it, sure. Corn is not bad for swine, but raw corn for men! You may excuse me. No wonder you eat like a hungry dog. You have gobbled up that whole tongue. It may make you sick after your diet of raw corn. As I understand your case, you have not been faring any too well. Now, cold baked potatoes and moldy johnny cake may be filling, but they are not found on the menu cards at swell banquets. Illinois must do better in her home charities. I shall report this to the Crown Bulb of the Lilies of Solomon. Cities and localities that are weak on 'handouts' for some occult reason are subject to calamities and dire disasters—floods, fires, drouths, cloudbursts, army worms and cyclones," hissed the Unterrified, laughing in bitter, mocking, joyless mirth.

"You seem to look on the future with doubt and gloomy apprehension," remarked John sorrowfully.

"No, sir; not a bit of doubt; certain as fate itself. Look at me, a first-class railroad man—a tramp, a vagrant. I have been arrested more times for vagrancy than you would care to hear. What do you think of the chain gang?"

"I think it bad. All such methods are deplorable and not in harmony with the spirit of our institutions. Still, you may not have been blameless yourself," con-

tinued John, with his usual clear impartiality. "I think my own family were the cause of much of their own financial trouble. They were too advanced, too trusting, too unselfish. The majority of mankind have not reached the summit of human brotherhood. They are still wallowing down in the mire of swinish greed and animal self-gratification. To them the sermon on the mount is figurative foolishness, neither applicable to men nor to nations."

"Hello, there! Hold on! Ain't you going too fast, even for a spring poet? Thunder, you are getting there; no mistake," ejaculated the Unterrified, laughing, well-pleased, for some reason which John could not wholly understand.

They were seated near together. John had fixed over the hay and spread out his blanket, inviting the ex-engineer to a seat beside him. They talked long and earnestly, sometimes in hoarse whispers, or whispered shrieks, signs, nods and gestures. They compared shoes, blisters and sores; even their dilapidated socks. They pointed to the rents in their coats and to their frayed trousers.

The Unterrified seemed to desire John's society. He led and directed the conversation. John was a good and willing listener and for this reason an agreeable companion. The Unterrified asked him many questions and seemed interested in every word John uttered. But John was not so eager for his unasked confidence. In truth, he felt a sense of repugnance for the aims and life of voluntary tramphood, willing vagrancy and professional indolence and beggary.

Still, he was surprised and fascinated by the information and logical resources of the ex-engineer, whose active mind, untrammeled by scholastic bigotry, went back to the first principles with all the directness and audacity of genius.

After eating a more than hearty breakfast John's university training began to assert itself. His social instincts were less torpid, his preconceived moral principles more dominant. Nevertheless he continued to listen passively to the original, radical reasoning of the ex-engineer, till the very social foundations seemed to give away and sink, wrecking and overthrowing the whole social superstructure, like the house builded on sand, and "great was the fall thereof."

John felt a sickening, shrinking, conservative disgust for the resistless logic and unusual conclusions of this bold, mocking, ruthless iconoclast.

John found himself repeating Pope's lines:

"Vice is a monster of such hideous mien,"

as if he hoped thereby to fortify his soul against the diamond-cutting logic of this adroit innovator, as he lunged, plunged and slashed into the vitals of our vulnerable respectability.

One by one the sleeping tourists roused up, shook themselves out, peered through the cracks, remarked on the weather and probable rate of speed, ate, drank, smoked, told stories and jokes, then lounged off to sleep again. They had each looked at John curiously if not suspiciously, but as he seemed under the care and protection of the Unterrified they thought him

some novice of the Lilies of Solomon. They bowed, smiled and winked at him fraternally, content to share his companionship indirectly from afar. Meantime the Unterrified remained seated near John, arraigning laws, governments and all unjust social combinations and institutions with the fire and fury of a Spartacus. He justified certain acts and methods which have never been deemed just nor fair by the majority of mankind. He condemned and execrated other conditions and enactments which society, by traditions and long usage, have accepted as just and politic, if not of divine origin.

John had never heard the righteousness of war, conquest and penal punishment questioned in all his short life. He was amazed, shocked, incredulous and repelled. Yet he was sitting there in silence, seeing American plutocracy turned upside down, denuded, revealed, besmeared and distorted beyond recognition. Such handling without gloves, such smashing of idols, such rending of papers and of parchments, such wreck and riot in the holy of holies of our most sacred institutions, such dancing and jeering on the graves of our most worshipful heroes, were enough to make Liberty Enlightening the World get down from her pedestal and take to the timber.

John Martindale shivered and drew backward. In his mental and moral commotion he trembled like one in a chill. His vivid and active imagination saw societies, nations and governments, disrobed and dishonored, standing abashed in their nakedness, grotesque, infamous and infernal—a vision of anarchy,

of pandemonium, indeed like the "reign of the beast." The vision of a social earthquake, upheaval and displacement affected his poetic nature like the final consummation of the vision seen by John on Patmos. Things which John Martindale had been taught to revere and venerate the Unterrified spit upon, reviled, dragged in the dirt and trampled under foot. Such steel-clad logic, such Jovian thunderbolts of facts and figures were indeed a new revelation. With eloquence born of glowing, burning genius, with scorn that would equal Lucifer, truly the Unterrified was terrible.

John, though silent, continued to tremble. He grew pale and faint. His head swayed, drooped and finally he sunk down unconscious, like one fainting or hypnotized. His sensitive soul yielded to its environments.

The Unterrified was strangely agitated. He caught up the unconscious form and carried it to the narrow opening made by the unclosed door. He pushed and jammed the door, increasing the open space, that the fresh air might come in John's face. The other men came up and offered assistance, but the Unterrified waved them back almost fiercely. The car was more than warm, the air close and doubly foul and reeking. They thought this caused John to faint. But it was no ordinary fainting. He remained unconscious, like one in a trance or dead. Meanwhile the ex-engineer continued to rub, pat, fan and aid respiration by all the means known to bare-handed science. He had learned these things, as he learned everything

else, partly by observation and partly by intuition, the sixth sense.

Having exhausted all material and visible resources without effect, he then made numerous mysterious motions and passes of occult meaning. At length John opened his eyes slowly and wonderingly. He then whispered feebly: "What is the matter? Did I faint?"

"No; not exactly," answered the Unterrified. "You have been unconscious; a kind of trance. Guess you ate too much tongue and gingerbread after your raw corn revelry. You are threatened with fever. Can you take a quinine capsule?"

John smiled weakly at the seeming absurdity of the question and answered pathetically: "Yes; I could swallow one if I only had it to swallow."

"Here is the box," whispered the Unterried, tenderly. "Take two if you can manage the gentlemen." John took two, which seemed to please the ex-engineer, who said encouragingly: "That's right; two may knock out the fever the first round."

Notwithstanding the two capsules John's fever increased. More quinine was given; even a cup of strong brandy and water, but to no purpose. Poor John Martindale grew more feverish and delirious. He had never been robust. Exposure to rains, dews and night air, long fasts, poor food, overexertion, sleeping under trees, haystacks and in fence corners had been too much for his delicate organism. He had taken cold, which even quinine failed to break. Every one in the car was eager and anxious to do

something for the sick boy. They helped change his underwear and bathe him in brandy and water. One unselfish fellow tore off the body of his last remaining shirt for rags to dress the sore feet of the invalid.

Two days the tramps, or ticketless tourists, continued their westward journey unmolested. The third night the train was crossing a wide, black, barren prairie in western Kansas, where the most alert and merciless officials are supposed to be located to watch and guard and work in the interests of the corporation. Kansas, being by birthmark, by inherited tendencies, antagonistic, is met by double antagonism. Kansas is not in high favor among the exploiters of the producers of wealth. Her people, her young men and young women, inherit the spirit of their equality-loving pioneer ancestors—men who came to Kansas to fight with "blood in their eye." That same old blood, transmitted to their children, has lost nothing of its fighting qualities, nothing of its resistance to tyranny. Kansas, like Poland, is a case of inherited hatred and antagonism. Kansas is not a freak nor a social and political monstrosity. Kansas is a child of its father and mother, a legitimate offspring of its parents, its forefathers. This birthmark of radicalism must not be overlooked nor forgotten.

That there was an undue or unusual vigilance on the part of trainmen had been told the impoverished tourists. They had been warned and cautioned. Notwithstanding this admonition, one of the nameless Lilies of Solomon, in his zeal to promote the tobacco

industry, lighted a match in the darkness. The light flashed out the opening and for an instant lighted up the wayside weeds. Enough; the Alert and Merciless saw the flash and chuckled ominously. They slowed up and stopped the train out on the open prairie. Conductor and brakemen, with gleaming lanterns, ran up and down the track, peering and searching for the tourists of the ties. They were discovered, the door jammed open by enraged and cursing brakemen, who sprung up into the car, lanterns in hand, swearing and kicking in a very unchristian spirit. The Nameless waited for no second order to go. They snatched up their belongings, jumped out into the darkness and disappeared, leaving the Unterrified standing over the quivering form of John Martindale like a mother defending her sick child.

The ex-engineer was cool and unabashed. He turned to them almost pathetically. He called the Alert and Merciless by name, for he knew them. He said, with unusual feeling: "Come, boys, curse and kick me till you are tired, but this boy here is sick, if not dying. Don't touch him; it will be dangerous. Let him ride on to some city or on over the mountains. You all know me; what I was and what I am now. Your turn may come next. Then you will not forget this one act of fraternal mercy."

"No, siree; you can't work that here. You would talk the birds down off the trees if they were fools enough to listen to your blarney. You get off and take him along," growled the Merciless, ferociously. "No more of your sharp tricks on us; they won't work.

You have already smuggled more tramps over the mountains than any other living man. No more words! Go! Git!" hissed the Merciless, menacingly.

"Now, look here, boys, what's the use?" said the Unterrified, soothingly. "Supposing he was your own sick brother, what would you think of the man who threw him out on the desolate prairie to die in the weeds? You know it is five miles to a house. He cannot stand, much less walk. If that boy is put out in the chill night air on the dew-wet ground he will die before twenty-four hours. Then I will go to the first Justice and swear that you kicked him off the car and murdered him. You will lose your jobs, if nothing more. But you won't do it. You are not so cruel and inhuman. Wait a minute. I have ten dollars left. Will that act as a blinder? Here it is. It's my last red; sorry it's not more."

The Merciless silently reached out his hand and took the ten dollars. He and the Alert turned their attention to the open door. They commenced to jerk, pull and push the door up into place. Meanwhile the Unterrified gathered up some food and the water can, placing them beside John, who remained silent and motionless, if not unconscious. Lastly the Unterrified reached down and pressed John's passive hand passionately, leaving in it the box of quinine capsules. Without fear, haste or speech he stepped down from the car and walked off into the darkness.

The car door was jammed up tightly and fastened most securely. No more friendly cracks, openings or side views. However, John was too ill to take

much heed. That he was alone and in darkness, in a close, reeking, unventilated cattle car did not trouble him. The train jerked, bumped, lunged and was soon moving on at full speed. At the first station five empty cars were switched off and left standing on the siding. Four cars had been ordered for some cattle shippers. The fifth car was unordered and run off by itself, away up by the bumpers. John was in this fifth car, fastened, abandoned and helpless.

The Alert and Merciless gloated and made merry. They had overreached and wreaked their petty vengeance on the Unterrified by proxy. They found it safer and more feasible.

CHAPTER III.

Five days later some Kansas shippers, wanting more cars, pushed up the unordered car, near the chutes, to be cleaned and bedded down with straw for their use. When the car door was opened they saw the body of a man, ghastly and motionless. That it was a corpse needed no confirmation. They sent for some proper person to take the body in charge. One shipper, of an investigative turn of mind, stepped into the car and took hold of the body. It was not rigid. The shipper called out: "He has been dead but a short time, as he is not yet cold."

"Maybe he is not dead at all, at all," remarked Murphy, the loader. "Faith, and I will see for meself."

"He has no pulse," declared the first investigator, with unmoved positiveness.

"But his heart beats!" shouted Murphy in triumph. "He may live yet to bate the old road out of many a ride, good 'cess to him," continued Murphy, in great glee, who thought stealing a ride a thing to emulate.

"Go for the doctor!" brawled the station agent, excitedly. "This is no common case; I can tell you that. There is more to this than shows on the surface," persisted the agent, mysteriously.

The doctor came, looked wise and calmly sympa-

thetic, as becomes a shrewd medical aspirant in any doubtful or critical case. He ordered the patient stripped, bathed and vigorously rubbed. Willing hands made quick work. It was Kansas and they smelled oppression afar off, like the war-horse of old. There was running in hot haste for soap, rags, pails of warm water and fresh drinking water. The station agent ran off and came flying back with a long night-shirt fluttering out from his hand. Meanwhile Mrs. Murphy, who lived in a shanty near by, brought her only whole woolen blanket to wrap around the "poor, friendless crater," as she called him, sorrowfully.

The bathing, rubbing, fresh air and a few drops of stimulant revived him somewhat. His eyes opened and his lips quivered as if he was trying to speak. His eyes roved around till they rested upon the man with the pitcher of drinking water. They understood that wistful stare. The doctor gave him water from a spoon. He swallowed with great difficulty a few times, for his throat seemed parched and almost paralyzed. Water was given him frequently and with good effect. His eyes grew more expressive and he whispered: "Water."

At this Mrs. Murphy clapped her hands joyfully, crying out excitedly: "Och, he's alive, the dear boy, in spite of the stingy old road; bad 'cess to the hard-hearted old plotocrats."

That he was a tramp—a poor, sick boy, stealing a ride apparently—this appealed to the heart of "bleeding Kansas" by inherited sympathies.

Many offered to take the invalid to their homes,

but Mrs. Murphy claimed him by right of discovery, for it was her own Dennis who first felt his beating heart. Because of this he was hers to nurse back to life, to continue the war. To her all tramps were sons of oppression and knights of "Our Cause." If any one knows what constitutes "Our Cause" then they can understand the feelings of Mrs. Murphy. Suffice it for us outside barbarians, tramps were included within the much-embracing folds of "Our Cause"—the ever-green, perpetual, perennial opposition.

After three days of Mrs. Murphy's ministrations John was able to sit up in her stuffed rocking chair, wrapped in her new crazy quilt. In the meantime she had washed and mended his clothing, while the King's Daughters of the place had made him some new underwear. The shirts were indeed a sight to behold. They were like elongated shirtwaists and doubtless cut from shirtwaist patterns. John smiled when they brought them to him—a smile that was not all a smile should be. Nevertheless he accepted them in the spirit in which they were given and wore them meekly, as a penitent wears his sackcloth.

Next day they added to his penance. They presented him with a pair of tweed breeches of their own cutting and making. Dear, sweet, trusting souls; they meant well. Their zeal may have exceeded their skill or judgment. Nevertheless they shall have their reward, in consciousness of doing all they could to help an unfortunate brother. That the breeches looked more like divided skirts than trousers does

not discredit their noble, generous intentions. The King's Daughters were all young devotees. They took an unusual interest in the case of John Martindale. Daily he received their sisterly visits. They never came empty-handed. Flowers, fruit, eggs, jellies, cakes, custards, chickens, game and sweet cream glutted Mrs. Murphy's larder.

John was in good hands—an unconscious hero. The whole town was interested in his recovery, but most of all the station agent. He scented a mystery, a plot or a conspiracy. He hoped to learn something from John which would implicate some one and at the same time turn or twist around to his own personal advancement. He had a genius for straining and distorting facts. Some would call him a liar, but he was more than that. Any one can tell a common, vulgar lie. But the station agent went beyond such cheap, weak falsehoods. He made the mere statement and arrangement of facts do his lying for him. He had the genius of a criminal lawyer or a boodle politician. He was ambitious but not cruel, intriguing but not malicious, selfish but not vicious.

To him there were design and purpose in John's being fastened up in an unordered cattle car and left standing on the siding. That basket of food, that can of water, that new-mown tame hay, that car door fastened securely on the outside, all roused his detective instincts. He wanted to get to the bottom of the whole affair; then use his knowledge for his own promotion.

He visited John often, making friendly social calls.

He was preparing his pumping machinery, getting things in order for future operations. He asked a few leading questions, but learned nothing of value. But he was neither daunted nor discouraged. He grew more cunning and circumspect. He continued and lengthened his friendly calls. One day he asked John, with a gush of friendly interest, to tell him how he came in that cattle car with such a supply of food, water and timothy hay. John was no fool. He was on his guard instantly; so soon do the sons of hunger forget their orthodox training and teaching. He felt no impulse to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. He dodged and evaded. He assumed forgetfulness with the skill and readiness of a sugar trust manager. John pleaded sickness. He was too ill to remember such things. He had a dim recollection of a person or persons bringing things into the car. It might be a dream or it might be reality. He certainly had been unconscious, if not delirious. The real and the unreal, the true and the false, were all mixed up together. Everything seemed like the fabric of a dream. He wanted to forget it all. It was too frightful and uncanny.

"Did you ride far?" asked the agent, with assumed indifference. Meanwhile he eyed John critically.

"Oh, I guess so. Most all night; maybe more; maybe less," responded John, with infantile simplicity—or duplicity.

"But that new-mown timothy hay," urged the crafty agent; "it was never cut in Kansas. It came

from farther east. The car came from Chicago. How do you account for that?"

"I know nothing about the car, where it came from or where it was going. I myself am going to California, car or no car," answered John, stoutly.

"Do you know the Unterrified?" questioned the agent, taking a new line of operation.

"Think I have heard the name somewhere," replied John, with slow meditation. "Who is he? What of him? Does he live around here?"

"No; he don't live anywhere. He's a professional tramp, if not a train robber. Every railroad man knows him, but no one can catch him in any of his deviltry. If I could catch him napping it would be a big job for me. I can tell you that much right here. If I could get down to the bottom of this affair I feel sure I could put my hand on the Unterrified. It is like one of his fine jobs."

John was now doubly on his guard. The Unterrified should not come to harm. This point was settled. John's memory had a relapse. He forgot with the speed of a trust magnate. Of this the agent was not aware. He told how he yearned and pined for promotion; how he needed a wider field for his aspirations. This mystery might be the key to unlock a higher sphere for his latent powers. He urged, flattered, coaxed and tried to frighten John into telling him all he knew. Failing in this, he told John what he knew himself. With his sharp eyes on John's face, he told him how he overheard the conductor and brakemen of the train that sidetracked his car laugh-

ing, boasting and crowing over some great, good joke they were playing off on the Unterrified. He had given them money, which they would blow in at the end of the division. He had sprung something on them. Now they would show him a trick worth two of his cheap affair. This was said while they were pushing the unordered car up to the bumpers. It might have had something to do with John and his helpless condition.

John was shocked and horrified. It was by great effort that he remained cool and silent. At length he said, slowly and without emotion: "If they purposely left me shut up there to die alone then they certainly are not good men."

The temptation to tell the agent the whole story of the ten dollars was almost irresistible. Human nature has its weak points, which must be fortified by the direct teachings of the Nazarene. John tried to strengthen himself by repeating to himself verses of the sermon on the mount: "Resist not evil," "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you and despitefully use you," not omitting the smitten cheek, nor "the cloak also." Notwithstanding all this, the unseemly thought of revenge would lurk around, unbidden, in his soul. However, he refused to utter one revengeful word. He kept his own sorrowful secrets.

The agent was baffled but not wholly deceived. John was a novice in the art of equivocation. He could control his words, voice and eyes, but not the telltale flush that crimsoned his cheeks. The agent

observed and drew his own conclusions. He returned to the case in another way. He told John that he saw the Unterrified walk by the station the morning after the cattle car was sidetracked. The Unterrified was alone and seemed sorrowful and altogether depressed. He walked very fast, as if in a great hurry. Three hours later five tough-looking fellows, tramps or train robbers, came slowly along from the east. They lounged around for awhile, eating and drinking. Finally they went on, with no show of haste nor purpose. As they looked suspicious he had telegraphed on and along the line to look out for the gang. With great self-satisfaction he proclaimed that he, James O. Getthere, had been the sole cause of averting a certain case of train robbery, if not train wrecking. He merely wanted his well-earned reward, promotion.

James O. Getthere was equal to any and all emergencies. He had learned by zealous inquiry that the six men had left the track the first day; they had not been seen since by any trainmen. John made no comments nor showed the least interest, save a deep flush on his otherwise pale face. He was deeply moved by what he heard.

The agent saw his chance of promotion melting away, but he froze it again by cold audacity and gall. He wrote an article and gave it to his friend, the editor of the Howling Coyote Lyre, as follows: "Another gang of train robbers thwarted in their nefarious designs by the vigilance and promptitude of the argus-eyed James O. Getthere, station agent of

Howling Coyote. The gang were suspected by this trusty gentleman, who had them followed and watched by the tireless section men on this perilous division. The cowardly gang of sneaking miscreants were finally frightened off to their mountain fastness by the courage and indomitable energy of one man, James O. Getthere. It will be a long time before they again visit a section intrusted to the faithful and intrepid James O. Getthere. The great Unterrified himself is the supposed leader of the formidable gang, as he was seen passing swiftly through Howling Coyote, as if rushing on to deeds of robbery and bloodshed. But the eagle eye of James O. Getthere discovered, thwarted and averted. Such merit, such service never goes unrewarded by a grateful public nor by a wise and munificent management."

Copies containing this self-laudation were marked and mailed to all the higher officials of the road. When James O. Getthere was approached on the subject he was modest, as becomes true worth and greatness. He finally admitted that he had done his whole duty in driving off the train robbers before the consummation of their fell designs. Enough; James O. Getthere was promoted!

CHAPTER IV.

At the end of three weeks John Martindale was well. He had, moreover, become a general favorite. All Howling Coyote was at his feet. He was their man. They had saved, rescued and nursed him back to life. They all felt a personal interest in him.

Mrs. Murphy was in no hurry to see him depart. He made little trouble. Whenever he went on his way westward she knew the flood would cease which had deluged her shanty with goodies; for her neighbors, not to be outdone by any charitable daughter of Erin, had maintained their self-respect by sending her unlimited dainties, ostensibly for John, but in reality to round out their own merit and benevolence.

Howling Coyote was on good terms with itself. It reverenced and admired itself. It went so far in its sublime generosity as to offer John a place in one of the schools, to teach in one of the lower grades. He felt the honor, but declined, as he was eager to resume his westward journey. His feet were healed and his shoes had been resoled by the village shoemaker.

Nor were the King's Daughters idle. They were active and zealous. They do nothing by halves. They found a farmer who was moving by wagon to Arizona, near Phœnix, where he had a married

daughter living and prospering. She liked Arizona and sent to have them come, as they had lost so much in Kansas, by hot winds, drouths, hail, cyclones, cloudbursts, floods, prairie fires and hog cholera that they were on the verge of bankruptcy.

The unfortunate farmer, Mr. Darling, had little to do to get ready to go on to Arizona. One advantage of having nothing is the facility of moving it from place to place; no bother to sell, pack or transport.

The Darling family consisted of Mr. Darling, his two sons, George and Frank, and two daughters, Jane and Sunflower. The Darling boys, George and Frank, came to see John. They offered him a free seat in their wagons, together with free "grub" and a hearty welcome. John was undecided, but they took him up to the sod house to see their father and sisters. As soon as John saw the younger sister, Sunflower, he accepted the invitation without further palaver.

The mother, Mrs. Darling, was killed in a cyclone five years before. Jane took her place when not teaching. At such times Sunflower was housekeeper, if not cook. The father and children were all pleasant, intelligent and intensely radical. Mr. Darling had been an old Kansas jayhawker. He was moral, temperate and without fear. He was as radical in religion as in politics, a good, honest man, who believed what he practiced and practiced what he believed.

The brothers, George and Frank, were sons of their father, manly, keen-witted young giants, well versed

in many things of which John was ignorant. They were elegant dancers, expert marksmen, skilled athletes, fluent debaters, fearless riders, posted politicians, radical thinkers and thorough Americans.

John was a university graduate, delicate almost to effeminacy—a handsome dreamer of beautiful dreams. Nevertheless, he liked the Darling boys and they thought him an interesting curiosity, if not an absolute freak. They looked at him in compassion. He looked at them in wonder. The sisters adored John; he was so unlike their brawny brothers. Jane, the teacher, the motherly elder sister, was neither youthful nor beautiful. Some might call her an old maid, both plain and prudish. Sunflower, the younger sister, was a yellow-haired, black-eyed, many-dimpled, sylph-like beauty.

John was a man. He looked at Sunflower and thought a ride to Arizona with her would not be a grievous infliction. She looked at him and was sure he would be the one thing to make the journey charming and enchanting.

John was no ladies' man. He had never before cared to look twice at any girl. He did not even like to hear girls talk, with their everlasting lisps, smirks, simpers and giggles. Their affected airs annoyed him. Their studied artificial dressing was offensive. Their purring, cooing, coquettish ways made him angry. It is not necessary to add that John had never been in love. The signs are unmistakable.

At the university John's clothes had never been like those of the other students. He was supersensi-

tive and felt the affliction of cheap, old garments beyond most men. He was doubly conscious of his shabby, seedy appearance. Whenever he saw young ladies look his way he thought them staring at his old coat or antiquated necktie. John was an ill-dressed Adonis, conscious of his poor clothes, but unconscious of his good looks. John had been called a woman-hater, when in truth he hated only himself.

But Sunflower Darling, bareheaded, in a clean blue calico dress, was a new kind of woman. She was beautiful, in spite of dress, sunburn and freckles. She was natural and unconventional, like a poet's dream of womanly companionship.

For some reason John spent many days at the sod house. Mrs. Murphy objected and the King's Daughters wondered. One day he went up to the sod house wearing the pants, or divided skirts, given him by the King's Daughters. They would have made a clown green with envy, they were so grotesque and impossible. He wore them as a duty, an act of gratitude, although his whole æsthetic soul rose up in rebellious protest. But virtue has its reward. Sunflower admired and approved of those trousers. She commended their free-handed amplitude and flowing fullness. This pleased John beyond all sense or reason. Henceforth he wore them without further distrust or mortification.

The day of departure came. The two covered wagons were loaded. A Jersey cow was tied behind one wagon; behind the other wagon were hitched two bronchos. The wagons were drawn by mule teams.

Sunflower and Frank were riding ponies, or bronchos, declaring that no such outfit could do without suitable outriders. Mr. Darling invited John to sit beside him on the spring seat. George and Jane were in the other wagon, George driving and Jane demurely silent. The Darlings had guns and a favorite bird-dog. The boys would hunt at times and enjoy their rural outing to the uttermost.

John had never fired a gun, much less owned one. He wondered how good men could find sport or enjoyment in shooting, maiming or killing the dear, sweet little quails, or the lovely, whizzing, whirring, frightened prairie chickens. Two other things marked John as no son of the "wild and woolly west." He was afraid of dogs and filled with unmanly fear when standing in the presence of a wild, frantic, plunging, kicking, bucking broncho. This last weakness he determined to overcome. He resolved to learn to ride on horseback. Sunflower and George both offered to teach him. They assured him they could make him a good horseman before they reached Phœnix. Even Mr. Darling tried to encourage him by telling him that a few hours a day on a horse would make any one a good rider, if they only used caution, sense and judgment. This was somewhat conditional. Nevertheless, he would try, come what would. The anticipation of riding with Sunflower and not making a spectacle of himself—this indeed was something to desire.

The teams moved slowly. The outriders were merry and overflowing with banter. John thought

the sun never before so bright, nor the sky so blue, the landscape so serene, nor the whole face of nature so benign and beautiful. Other men at other times and at other scenes have thought the same. Let the mystery remain a secret forever.

About noon they halted beside a creek. They fed their horses and ate their lunch. The brothers took their guns and dog and went out on the prairie and up and around some draws or ravines. They returned with well-filled game sacks. Sunflower would have fried quail and prairie chicken for supper. Poor John forgot to grieve over the dead quails after learning that Sunflower wanted them to grace the evening meal. He sunk even lower in his own estimation by wishing that he, too, could do something, even kill something, to add to her pleasure.

During the afternoon John took his first lesson in horsemanship. George and Sunflower were his able instructors—past masters in the art of broncho-riding and broncho-breaking.

John rode Sunflower's pony, as that was gentle and not given to tricks or bucking. John proved an apt pupil. He succeeded so well that he and Sunflower rode on together most of the afternoon, until Jane beckoned to her sister to come back up to the wagons. Then Jane whispered to her that it was not proper to ride so long with a strange young man. Sunflower laughed good-naturedly, telling Frank to come take her horse and ride with John, while she would take his place and drive. They changed places and one more sacrifice was offered on the altar of propriety.

At night they stopped at a deserted homestead. There was a well of good water, a sod house and a number of sheds and a corral. They took possession and made things comfortable for themselves and their stock. By common consent the work was divided. Each one knew his part. There was no clashing nor bickering. George and Frank cared for the horses, Mr. Darling milked the cow and tethered her out to grass. Jane prepared the beds, while Sunflower and John prepared the evening meal.

The whole arrangement was satisfactory. At least John and Sunflower thought it well planned and masterful. They were both good cooks and knew what to do and how it was done. John was a little embarrassed, but that was owing to other causes. He looked at Sunflower when he might better be looking at the frying quails, but she held him down to strict business by calling his attention to the smoking spiders.

The supper was pronounced fine; but they were hungry, almost ravenous, therefore easily pleased. As they were tired, they went to bed early and slept soundly till about four o'clock, when George and Frank arose, dressed and went out to the horses to move them on fresh grass. The others were soon up cooking and repacking, so as to start in the cool morning.

Sunflower and John worked well together. They were quick to learn the likes and dislikes of each other. Jane thought they were too free, if not too familiar. They talked without even thinking of such

a thing as gender. This shocked Jane, who had a fad—propriety. Sunflower also had a fad—fun and frolic. Jane was always being shocked, while Sunflower was always more or less shocking. The sisters adored each other—the prude and the passion flower.

Sunflower thought John an old friend, if not lover. Jane insisted that he was a strange man and therefore to be feared and avoided. Jane was immodestly modest; Sunflower was modest, immodestly. They were both good, pure girls, although unlike in their views of life and its possibilities and impossibilities. Jane never forget her sex. Sunflower never thought of it unless her sister made it a point of sage reflection.

CHAPTER V.

The Darlings had been five days on their journey. John had learned to ride on Sunflower's pony, but he shrank from riding the other horses. He was agile and observant. He mounted gracefully and held the bridle without awkwardness. Furthermore, he sat up and rode smoothly, like a real cowboy, whose grace and elegant pose he never tired of admiring.

The morning of the sixth day Sunflower said she and John would ride on ahead to the Artesian Wells. At this Jane was shocked even more than usual. The Artesian Wells were at least twenty miles away. Jane suggested to George the propriety of him riding on with them, as it would look better. "Better to whom?" grunted George, scornfully. "Not to John and Sunflower, I'll bet two cents, and there is no living person on the road to see or report proceedings. My sweet sister, there's not a house this side of Artesian Wells."

Then that horrid brother walked off whistling, as though he had not recklessly ignored a great fraternal responsibility.

Sunflower stood beside the wagon. Jane was up on the spring seat, ready to ride whenever the others were through discussing and directing.

Sunflower was soothing and smiling up to Jane in

her endeavor to reassure her. She made the awful breach of propriety of deftly and deliberately unfastening the band of her outer skirt. It dropped to the ground. She gave it a kick, caught it on her toe; then catching it in her hands tossed it up to Jane, who was shocked, almost paralyzed.

True, Sunflower was dressed in her denim divided skirts, and the outer skirt was worn only as a protection while working. Nevertheless, Jane was shocked, for John was standing there holding the two ponies, waiting for Sunflower to mount. Sunflower always wore divided skirts, as she rode astride, to the infinite scandal of sister Jane, who rode a vestal sidesaddle whenever she thought it proper to ride at all—at such times as there were no winds to sway or lift her long and all-concealing skirts. Poor Jane found life a sad trial in many unavoidable ways. To her Sunflower was both a comfort and a torment. Such sweetness and such imprudence; such kisses and such high kicking. Oh, it was terrible! What could she do? What could any one do with a girl, almost eighteen, who acted more like a boy than like a prim young lady?

Sunflower sprung on her pony without waiting for assistance. She rode circling around the wagons, laughing and talking to them all. She did look charming in her cheap, home-made riding suit of blue denim, divided skirts, Eton jacket, white shirtwaist, blue denim necktie and Tam O'Shanter, with white goose quills up at one side. In her cheap riding costume she looked dainty and beautiful in the eyes of

John Martindale. He was sure none of the young ladies at Ann Arbor were half so adorable. With a laugh and a wave of farewell the two rode blithely away westward.

For some reason John could not act at his ease. He trembled, blushed and sometimes even grew pale, white and silly-looking. He did not talk as freely and unembarrassed as usual. Sunflower questioned him; asked him what made him shiver, shake and tremble so much. Was he sick? He certainly looked first red, then white. She rode up beside him and took his hand, impulsively, to feel his wrist. His hand was cold and trembling. He looked at her in a hungry, gushing, idiotic way and answered: "I don't know what is the matter, myself. Your hand thrills me like the touch of a live wire."

"Oh, fiddlesticks," sniffed Sunflower and hit her pony a slap and dashed on ahead, wondering if all men save her father and two big brothers were born fools, stark, raving idiots.

Throughout the long ride she continued to lead. They conversed little, as they rode fast, and the way was sometimes obscure, hard to find and difficult to follow. John rode as one in a dream. He followed Sunflower without doubt or questions. All trails and points of compass were alike to him on the characterless plains. He thought she was leading east, but followed her because he trusted her knowledge of the country. She could see landmarks where he saw only confusion. Without once missing the way, they arrived at the Wells long before noon. It was the head-

quarters of an extensive cattle ranch. The men were all out on the range; at least there was no one at the ranch shanties nor at the corrals. They dismounted, watered their horses and helped themselves to whatever they liked, after the style of the free and easy west.

Sunflower was very talkative, yet made no further remarks on John's nervousness. She went up to her pony and patted his neck and putting her arms around his neck and leaning her head up against the pony, after the manner of women who are fond of horses.

John was dazed. He was astonished and overwhelmed by his unusual emotions, standing first on one foot, then on the other, smiling, blushing, trembling and looking at Sunflower, who thought to reassure him by proposing a round of inspection. When they came to the great overflowing water tanks she bathed her face and hands, taking down her wealth of wonderful hair, wetting, combing and rearranging it to her liking. John also washed his hands and combed his hair. He tried to be social and agreeable, but the effort was too apparent. Yet Sunflower was perfectly composed, wholly master of the situation, without emotion or passion. She liked John when he was not sentimental. At such times she called him a fool, within herself, and went on as if she did not notice his folly.

She led the way around the premises. They peered into windows, under sheds, around the shanties and sod house. Then Sunflower saw a nice little house,

with a neat little door fastened by a long wooden pin, made fast to the door casing by a short rope. She ran gayly on before John and drew out the wooden pin and swung the door wide open. With a bound and plunge a ferocious mastiff sprung out, knocking Sunflower down by the force of his great body. She gave a wild, despairing shriek and fainted.

Instinctively John started backward, but, seeing Sunflower on the ground and the dog standing over her, he took a step forward. The red-eyed mastiff growled at him viciously and showed his terrible teeth by way of emphasis.

The dog acted as if he had not fully made up his mind which one to tear, rend and slay first. Sometimes he would walk a few steps toward white-faced, quivering John, taking his watchful eyes off the prostrate, motionless form of Sunflower. At such times she would whisper to John frantically: "Go! Go! Go!" Then the dog, hearing her voice, would whirl and come back to her and put his nose down to her ear, growling eloquently, as much as to say: "My lady, you keep quiet till I fix that fellow. Then I will attend to your case."

She understood dogs as well as horses. Instinctively she had fallen with her face near the ground and partially guarded by her right arm. She closed her eyes, so as not to look at the frightful brute, and also to deceive him. Instinct and reason aided her.

Furthermore, she was aware that the dog was merely watching her and not intending to rend her limb from limb and crunch the bones. Her safety was to

wait events quietly. Poor, white-faced John was slowly gliding backward. He was backing on toward the corner of the house. The dog seemed to guess his intention, for he ran almost up to him, growling savagely. It was then Sunflower shrieked out wildly: "Run! Run for the cowboys to come and call off the dog." At the sound of her voice the dog whirled and came back to her, as she meant he should. This was John's opportunity. He vanished around the house corner. The dog looked, but not seeing him remained beside Sunflower.

John mounted and rode furiously away to find some one to call off the dog. In his terror and impotent agony he was ashamed of himself and loathed the part he felt forced to play. He was mad with horror and self-detestation; so weak, so helpless, so unmanly, so unlike the model hero who valiantly slays the ferocious beast and triumphantly rescues the imperiled maiden. Alas for knightly prowess! The imperiled maiden had planned and secured his safety. Oh, it was bitter; it was mortifying; it was degradation. John was weeping, whether for himself or for Sunflower remains a sad secret. Why, oh, why could not his bold, strong soul lead up his weak, shivering body to grapple, barehanded, with that enraged mastiff?

He thought of George Darling, the giant; how he could have killed the dog with a kick, or torn him asunder, as Samson did the lion. Then, as if to multiply his tortures, he thought of Sunflower herself. He fancied he saw the brute chewing and

tearing her at his leisure, her blood dripping from his jaws and her yellow hair dangling and clinging to his fangs. In his agony he shrieked aloud and the pony flew faster.

Why was he born with a terror, a horror for dogs? Oh, the shame, the madness, the self-humiliation and loathing! What were Greek tragedy, or Roman history, or the mathematics of Euclid, or the learning of Aristotle compared to the athletic prowess of George Darling? Bare-handed he would have slain that mastiff. John was working himself up to a fine frenzy. In fact, he was growing mad, demented, delirious. The shock had been too great and too sudden.

How or where he rode he knew not till he heard the pony's labored breathings. Then he held up and slackened his speed. He saw a cowboy coming sauntering slowly toward him, his horse almost walking. John waved, shouted, yelled and shrieked wildly. The cowboy seemed in no hurry to meet a madman, riding as though chased by a thousand Apaches. Nevertheless John continued to wave, yell and shout. The cowboy increased his speed somewhat, yet seemed in no hurry to meet a howling lunatic, as John appeared to him; for no man but a fool or a madman would ride like that out on the open range. Breathless, hatless, wild-eyed and speechless, John met the cool son of the plains. Then, with a sob and a hysterical laugh, he pointed toward the Artesian Wells and articulated one word: "Dog!"

The cowboy, who was the manager, was not slow to guess the trouble, as that day the dog had been left

unchained. He ejaculated one hot word, and it was not hades, either; then tossed up his slackened rein, with a yell and whoop, driving his cruel spurs deep in the flanks of his startled pony. Like a frightened deer it flew on over the wide rolling range, till a large sandhill hid him from view.

John jerked his pony around and tried to follow close in his rear, but the pony seemed to reel and stagger as he started back toward the Wells. Notwithstanding the condition of the pony, John urged it on with reckless ardor. As he neared the Wells there were some barren sandhills. On over these he urged the tired broncho. On top of the highest he caught a view of the ranch buildings. This added to his excitement. He tried to imitate the yell and whoop of the cowboy as he was going down the sandhill. The pony plunged forward, his foot sunk in a hole; he fell. John struck the ground and lay senseless. When John came to the pony was lying near him, with its head doubled back under its body—dead. Its neck was broken. This new calamity was like the last straw on the camel's back. He put his hand to his aching head. It was wet with his own blood.

He tried to rise, but his head was dizzy. He reeled and fell down in whirling blackness. The next he heard or knew was the sound of a bell and a long, reverberating shout. The cowboy was calling, either for him or for other help. By a frantic effort he staggered to his feet, felt the dead pony, then, slowly taking off the bridle and saddle, he started toward the Wells, carrying them along in bewilderment.

As he neared the ranch buildings he dropped the bridle and saddle and hurried on to meet the grim and silent cowboy.

"Where is Sunflower?" gasped John wildly.

"I don't know," he answered briefly.

"Did the dog kill her?" whispered the poet sadly.

'No; he did not hurt her. Of this I am certain," replied the manager, with great positiveness.

"But where is she?"

"That is more than I know. When I came here she was not here and everything was quiet and just as I left it; the dog fastened up in his kennel, as though no one had been here to let him out. Neither would I believe he had been out if I did not see his tracks in the sand, as well as the print of a woman's form where she fell in front of the kennel. That dog is a fierce, cruel brute. He has killed two men who came here to rustle. No one can manage him but myself. Now he has been out; that much is settled. That is what troubles me. The question is who put him back in his house? Who fastened the door? The girl walked out to her horse, pulled up the tethering pin and rode away, doubtless in search of you."

"I don't believe one word you say," hissed John, with reckless abandon. "You have secreted her body, or, what is worse, carried her off alive and hid her in some cave or dugout. My horse is dead, so I can't follow her nor find you."

"I am right here, already found," said the cowboy, meekly for one of his build and black, flashing eyes. "I don't blame you, a tenderfoot, for believing al-

most anything, for I swear I never was so puzzled in all my life. He has been out and is now fastened up. Not one of our men has been here. Of this I am certain. Another thing, the woman walked to her horse alone and rode away alone."

"I wish I could think so," murmured the frenzied poet, doubtingly, as he looked in the face of the manager intently, as if searching there to find some clew or key to the mystery.

At length the stalwart son of the plains threw back his head almost haughtily and addressed John calmly, without bitterness or resentment. There was even a note of sorrow in the clear, cool words.

"Look here, boy, I know the Darlings. I am expecting them here about this time. I had a letter from George, saying they were going to drive through to Arizona and would stop here with me for a few days. Mr. Darling and my father were old friends and comrades. They were in the First Kansas—good old jayhawkers together. I know Sunflower. She is no fool. She is all right. Trust her for that. I have property back near Howling Coyote. When I was back there last winter I was soft enough myself to try and make love to Sunflower; but I was not her style. I was too much like her own brawny brothers. Now, a little baby-faced meaching skinny-rivet, like you, might strike her fancy. You seem dead gone on her. Now, if she can fancy such an addle-brained, tallow-faced, chicken-hearted dude that is her business, not mine. One thing is sure, I am out of the race. Still I bear her no grudge or ill-will. It was

not her fault that I did not fill the bill. The Darlings are poor; I am not. That I am rich made no difference with Sunflower. She is a good girl—a trump card; no mistake; nothing little or mean about her. She wanted me to marry Jane, but there is too much prudery and propriety there for my stomach. She did not suit me any more than I suited Sunflower. It was no go. Still, I think Jane was like Barkis, but I wasn't.

"No, sir; I would no more harm a hair of Sunflower Darling's yellow curls than I would harm my mother's gray locks. You are on the wrong trail here. It would please me more to be of service to her than I would care to have everybody know."

"You talk well," retorted John sullenly, "but where is the girl? I think her body is shut up in the kennel with that bulldog. There! Hark! Hear him craunch. He is gnawing bones."

"Quite likely," remarked the manager, unmoved. "I gave him a cow's head since I came back. Now I will call him out and you can look in the kennel for yourself."

"Yes; you want the dog to kill me, too," said John, shrinking backward in terror.

"Oh, you miserable little sand-flea, but you do carry your imagination along with you," laughed the son of the jayhawker, in derision. He opened the kennel door. The mastiff came out, fawning, whining and licking the hand of his master, who told John to look in and inspect the inside of the dog's house. He looked in with great shyness and circumspection. He saw a

cow's head; nothing more. He turned away with an air of disappointment, but he avoided the place where the cowboy was playing with the terrible dog.

"Now are you satisfied?" asked the robust ranchman, coldly.

"No; I am not satisfied," declared John, stubbornly. "She may be gagged and concealed in the house, down cellar or up in the loft, or in some underground passage. I have read of such things."

"Oh, you little pismire; your imagination is getting away with whatever sense you may have had. A fellow would have a poor show kidnaping Sunflower with George and Frank hot on the trail. Her horse is not here. That would not be so easy to gag and hide."

"I am not worrying about her horse," said the frenzied poet, bitterly. "I want to find Sunflower."

"Well, if you are not skittish, come on and look through the house." They went through the shanties and sod house. There was neither, loft, cellar nor secret passage. The earth was solid and gave no sounds of hollowness.

John was perplexed, but not convinced. His head was aching and he felt dizzy, if not dazed. He was asking himself: What did it all mean? Where was Sunflower? Was the impossible possible? Was she really safe and unharmed? What had he better do?

With moist eyes, quivering lips and a blood-stained face, he asked the ranchman, imploringly, to tell him what he had better do. It did not take the prompt, business-like Kansan long to give his advice.

"Go bathe your head and face, eat and drink a cup of coffee, which I have ready on the table. Then put your saddle and bridle on one of my ponies and ride back to the teams. Tell George and Frank to ride on with you to hunt up Sunflower; that is, if she is not there with them already."

John obeyed willingly. The horse was a fleet, nervy broncho and soon ready for the ride.

As John mounted and was preparing to go the cowboy handed him a canteen filled with water, some bread and meat wrapped in a napkin, and a box of matches, saying, half-scornfully, that no tenderfoot should ride out alone on the plains without a canteen and a day's rations.

John hung the canteen band over his shoulder, put the food in his pockets, but handed back the box of matches, saying that he did not smoke and had no use for matches. But the plainsman refused to take them back, telling John to keep them, as he might want them to start a fire to cook rattlesnakes; that matches were a good thing in emergencies. John put them in his pocket and rode fleetly off westward.

"Where are you going, you son of a gun?" shouted the cowboy, wrathfully.

"To meet Mr. Darling," answered John, with irritation.

"Well, if that is the case you better turn about and ride east. You are riding westward. You better ride back east over the road you traveled this morning. It will save you a few years' time."

John dropped his head in confusion, saying

humbly: "I guess I am turned around. My head aches and throbs terribly. Perhaps my fall made it worse. Good-by. Thank you for your kindness. If I have said anything unkind forgive me. I am so troubled and worried I am not myself to-day. It is as you say—my imagination runs away with my judgment."

"All right. Go ahead, or the Darlings will be here before you start," called out the ranchman, in mild impatience.

John galloped off toward the east with renewed confidence, while the stalwart Kansan looked after him with a sneering frown. Soon he gave a loud growl of disgust as he saw John veering around to the westward, still riding at a rapid pace.

Having killed one horse, John rode with more caution, if not wisdom. He avoided many suspicious-looking uplands and deserted prairie dog villages, often looking earthward, as if following some special trail or pathway. To him the unfenced range was "without form and void." To his untrained eye there were no landmarks nor means of telling nor recognizing one locality from another. It was sameness and universal chaos, a wilderness of anarchy and a desert of labyrinths.

He was riding faster than he knew. The broncho he was riding was the fleetest on the ranch and the easiest riding. He dashed on westward without halt or hesitation, just as Sunflower rode that morning. She was a child of the plains, vigilant, observing and rigorously exact. To her the plains had character

and individual points—a trail as easy to follow as a beaten roadway. She was always trying to teach him the art, craft and wisdom of the American Bedouin. Now he was left to himself he had cause to regret that his whole attention had been centered on the teacher and not on her instructions.

She always rode where she liked, without regard to road, trail or previous pathway. He was doing the same, with this difference: She had some visible point in view, of which she never lost sight; he rode wild, with nothing in view but to dash on and on, over grassy plains and rolling, barren sandhills.

At length he began to wonder why he did not meet the teams. They certainly must be driving slower than usual.

He was riding fast and far, yet no sign of road, wagons or men. He thought it indeed strange. Notwithstanding, he again tossed up his hands, yelled and whooped and went flying away to the southwest. After riding about thirty miles the whole appearance of the country changed. John was certain he was in a strange and desolate locality, without herds, trees or cattle trails. Still he rode on fleet and furious, thinking every moment he would meet the teams.

Then a terrible thought took possession of his excited brain. He had been told the wrong trail, the wrong direction, by the wicked and revengeful rival.

John no longer censured, blamed or arraigned himself. The burden of fault and folly was transferred to the broad shoulders of the upright and honorable Kansan. John felt himself wronged, deceived, basely

decoyed and overreached. These thoughts were like madness. His imagination twisted and distorted every word and action of the friendly ranchman. Suspicion took full possession of his poetic soul.

He was roused. He determined to retrace his steps and thwart the foul designs of the cunning villain. He would rescue Sunflower. His imagination was full of old romantic fancies. He could almost hear her shriek and call for help. He fancied her in conditions and situations too terrible for words.

He checked his onward career, turned his horse about to retrace his steps. The wind had been blowing for more than an hour. The sand was driven around in dust clouds. He could not find his own trail. Soon he became aware that he was lost, hopelessly lost; lost on the arid plains, without compass, gun or provisions.

In his fright and bewilderment everything was distorted and exaggerated. The very sky, earth and sun seemed strange and unusual. The red sun was flaming and glaring in the east; the sky, the firmament, seemed uplifted, receding and far, far away, without fleck or cloud, while the earth was drifting sands, sandhills and sand valleys.

Terror and desolation encompassed him. He thought he was growing demented, or was it some optical illusion? He put his hand to his head, as if to make sure he was awake and not dreaming some dismal, distracting dream.

Alas, he was awake and the barren, desolate landscape was real; the condition, the peril, an awful real-

ity. He was cold and trembling in the glowing sun and scorching sands. Dismay and a vivid fancy pictured the future with scenes of death and despair, thirst and starvation, wolves, buzzards and bleaching bones.

He led his reeking pony up on the highest sandhill and stood long, gazing around in dazed, hopeless bewilderment. The labored breathing of the broncho told of his furious pace. As John stood there beside the foam-flecked animal, holding the reins on his arm, he wondered why the manager had given him so valuable a horse to ride off into the trackless wilderness, to perish miserably.

He found himself thinking more of his own fate and less of the possible fate of Sunflower. A great and present calamity confronted him. Sunflower and her mysterious disappearance seemed far away, things of the past. Self-preservation, personal peril and impending doom were present, clamorous and all-absorbing. Sunflower—could anything drive her image and well-being, her danger and possible fate, from his thoughts? Let those answer who know the limits of human nature.

The broncho, after resting awhile, grew uneasy, as though eager to be going, eager to leave the land of thirst and starvation and reach the regions of grass and water. Moreover the wind was going down, the sand and dust settling. The air grew clear and distant objects became visible. Far, far to the southwest a long, faint line of timber was visible. Timber meant grass and water, for Sunflower had told him, in

her lessons on plainscraft, that timber and water and grass were found together.

However, one thing John had not taken into account—the dry transparency of the atmosphere. The cloudless, vaporless air rendered objects at a great distance visible. To John's unaccustomed eye the timber appeared to be five or six miles away. It was in reality twenty miles off. John mounted and rode recklessly onward. He hoped to find people living near the timber. From them he could learn the way back to the Artesian Wells.

It was after sundown when he approached the long, continuous belt of timber. He was disappointed. He had expected to find herds and the habitations of men. Nothing of the kind was in sight. Sunflower had told him that timber and the frontiersman were found together. She had misled him and he had been deceived by her words. He found himself blaming her for his disappointment, if not all his present trouble. John was a man and a lineal son of our first father—Adam. Why should he continue to blame himself when there were others whom he could burden with his faults and failures? Adam established the precedent, which no son of his has ever felt bound to ignore.

John rode slowly along the edge of the timber, looking for a log house, shanty or sod house. He found nothing but primeval solitude and utter desolation.

The intelligent horse of the plains scented water and grew impatient as John rode along slowly in search of signs of habitation. This irritated the

thirsty broncho, which gave a few mad, frantic leaps, then stiffened his legs, dropped his head, humped up his back and came down stiff and standing.

John was thrown forcibly to the ground. He was stunned by the fall. When he came to he tried to rise, but felt a sharp pain in his right knee. At first he thought his leg broken, but after repeated efforts he found he could stand and walk a few steps, with much pain and difficulty.

He was anxious to secure the bucking broncho before he took it into his head to make a bold dash for freedom. Alas! he saw it cantering off, with bridle flying, over the sandhills, presumably toward the Artesian Wells. He never saw that broncho again.

Bruised, bleeding, lost, hungry, lame and surrounded by trackless plains of drifting sands—all this was bad enough, but to be deserted by a treacherous, bucking broncho was indeed the very dregs of human bitterness.

John staggered toward a friendly tree and dropped down in the attitude of prayer. The stars came out and the new moon appeared. Still John remained on his knees, motionless, whether weeping or praying remains unknown. This much is known—when he arose to his feet he had the appearance of decided self-control, if not of absolute resignation.

In the faint moonlight he saw some dried grass. He gathered together a large pile, which he carried in among the trees. He carried the dry grass and threw it down between the great surface roots of a large tree. Here he made himself a bed for the night.

After he had time for calm, manly reflection he worried less and less about Sunflower Darling. He thought her a girl of wit and infinite resources. She could take care of herself in any emergency. Comforting thought; pleasant assurance; superior assumption; knightly sanctuary.

The more he thought of his own condition and exploits the higher rose his estimate of the skill, sense and ability of Sunflower. If she were only there with him she would find some way out of all this trouble. She would lead him back to safety.

But his head ached and his knee was painful. These minor discomforts attracted and diverted his attention. He was also very thirsty and faint from long fasting, as he had eaten little during the day. He turned over on his side to find a more comfortable position. Something large and hard annoyed him. He put his hand down to remove the object. It was the canteen. He drank and took from his pocket some bread and meat. He had forgotten them. Now he felt grateful to the giver, even though he still distrusted him.

The wind was blowing; the timber creaked and moaned. The distant coyote howled to his far-off neighbor. John was excited and overwrought. He closed his eyes. A vision was ever present—that red-eyed, terrible-mouthed bulldog, standing growling and glaring over the prostrate form of Sunflower Darling. He could think, but not sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

Next morning, long before daylight, John was startled by a sound in the tree above his head, like the familiar gobble of a turkey. He looked upward, but saw nothing save the dark, dense foliage of the tree-tops. At the first bright gleam of dawn he was again amazed and panic-stricken by hearing terrific whizzing, whirring and flopping of dark objects, projected wildly down through the air from over his head. He questioned himself; what did it all mean? Was he growing demented? Was his brain affected by his falls or were the woods bewitched? His overstrained nerves exaggerated and intensified every sound and sensation. His judgment was not reliable. Of this he was somewhat aware. Too often had he been deceived by imagination not to question and doubt forever his own reasoning. To him the flight of a jack-rabbit was like a stampeding herd of cattle, the howl of a lonely coyote like the wails from an orthodox hades. John was quivering and great drops of cold sweat told of his mental anguish. Again and again that whizzing, whirring, dropping sound, followed by an unmistakable gobble. Could it be that people were living near? Why did the welcome sound so agitate and affright him? He could not have told himself the cause of his alarm.

At length kindly daylight came and dispelled the phantoms conjured up by his excited, treacherous imagination. He had spent the night under a towering cottonwood tree, chosen by the wild turkey gobblers as their roost. He looked around under the tree and the whole mystery was solved. The unseen terrors of darkness departed. The light of day removed most of his torments. The things which he saw were bright, cheerful and encouraging, while the things pictured out by imagination had been diabolical. True, his head was throbbing and his eyes inflamed and almost swollen closed. There was also a deep, bleeding gash in his scalp and his knee was stiff, purple and very painful.

Inasmuch as he was in no immediate peril, he quietly made an inventory of his possessions and resources. He emptied his pockets. He found a lead pencil, jackknife, small tablet, box of matches, some strings, a handkerchief, pocketbook, no money, three postage stamps, a toothbrush, pocket mirror, manicure set, his graduating papers and the letter to Lawyer Rush, together with two sandwiches and the canteen partly filled with water.

He ate a sandwich, drank a little water, then tore out some leaves from his tablet, wrote on them his name, condition, date and probable location. These notices he intended to fasten on the bark of trees with sharp little sticks, in many conspicuous places. He expected searchers would be out looking for him—fifty full miles from the Artesian Wells. But poor

John was ignorant on this point, as well as on some others.

Having arranged his affairs, he hunted around and found a long, stout stick, which he used for a staff. He limped around, posting his little notices. Afterward he went in search of water, going into the timber, where the underbrush was dense and the trees of large size, thinking there must be water near by to stimulate such unusual growth. He reasoned well, but nature is not always logical. There was no visible moisture. The expected spring was dry and the hoped-for river was not found. Nevertheless he continued to limp onward to learn the nature, extent and resources of his enforced quarters. He must find food and water, for his lameness held him a prisoner within the confines of the timber. Lame and without compass, he might travel long in the hot sun and scorching sands without finding the habitation of men. The timber was more friendly and held greater possibilities than the barren sand drifts.

He meant to remain in and around the timber until the Darlings or the cowboys came to his rescue, which he felt sure they would accomplish. In the meantime he would not be idle, but show those big fellows that he was not quite such a weak, helpless creature as they in their strength and brawn inferred. He was roused to greater enterprise and deeds of daring, thinking thereby he might regain Sunflower's favor and approval. He had succeeded in convincing himself that she was somewhere safe and looking for him.

The novelty of the situation, the romantic scenery,

pleased his poetic perceptions. From the gloom of dismal darkness he had come out into the brilliant, realistic light of day. He was no longer tormented by imps and specters of darkness. The glorious light of day had driven them off with the shades and goblins of night-time.

John felt a thrill of delight as he wandered on through the cool, shady woods. Truly there was plenty of wood and he had matches. These were important items, but not the great essentials—food and water. It was at this time that John recalled the remark of the cowboy—matches to make "fire to broil rattlesnakes." John shuddered with disgust at the mocking insinuation. Rattlesnakes indeed! He could and would find something better. Nevertheless the thrust struck home and left a sting, a pang, like blood-poisoning.

With the energy of desperation he limped forward, expecting every moment to come to the banks of some flowing stream. He soon found the banks and the river's bed, but for some occult reason the river was not at home. It had left its comfortable bed and board, like some truant wives, whom their loving spouses advertise by way of marital insult.

At all events the river was not visible—flowing underground some might believe and prove. But to John's eyes it was simply dried up, evaporated and floated away in vapory clouds; taken a summer outing; gone east to visit the Father of Waters. It would return when the rains came.

John clambered and stumbled down the steep

banks into something like an arroyo. It was wide and covered with rocks, pebbles, coarse gravel, sand and bowlders of many kinds and shades of coloring. He wanted to learn which way was up and which way down stream. He knew that he himself was turned completely around, as the sun that morning seemed to rise in the west. By long search and close observation he found a fallen tree, against which was lodged some driftwood and dried grasses. These told him positively which way the current had carried them. Thus he learned which way to go in search of the source of the absent river. He was certain and walked on without further hesitation.

Sometimes the banks would widen out, like the banks of some dried-up lake. Again they would approach and come near together, like some draw, or dried-up canyon.

Moreover, the spirit of discovery and exploration was upon this limping poet and he pressed on, in spite of hunger, thirst and lameness. Once he found a place where water was slowly oozing and trickling from the side of the high rocky walls, which had been eroded by the action of water. John went up to the damp, mossy wall. He could reach the place where a small stream was running and spreading out over the damp walls. He poked and probed around, collecting and confining the outflow. With some skill and labor he confined the water till it flowed down a clear, cool stream, wide as his hand. He was delighted. He drank, filled his canteen, washed his face and hands, making his toilet and bathing his swollen knee.

After resting and more drinking he resumed his research. He frequently came to moist places, where rank weeds and wild plums and berries were growing. Sometimes there were wonderful grapevines, reaching up and out, twining around trees and overspreading the tops with quantities of partially ripened grapes, hanging down in festoons.

As he advanced the banks grew steeper and higher and nearer together, like twin cliffs, ledges and sheer precipices of sandstone or conglomerate. He walked on up into the narrow canyon. In places the ground was damp and little stream-like outlines of moisture gave indications of water, if not of springs. With his staff he dug a shallow hole in the line of moisture; it filled with water.

As he advanced the indications increased. The line of moisture became a visible stream of moving liquid that a fly might have waded through. It was so shallow that the pebbles were dry on top. Nevertheless it was surface water and John was wild with delight. He continued to advance till he came to a large, clear pool of cool spring water, bubbling up from the pebbly bottom. John was satisfied with his discovery. It was good luck enough for one day. He resolved to remain near this pool till the coming of the rescuers. He drank. The water was fresh and without the taste of sulphur or alkali. He stripped and bathed in the pool. He shook and dusted his clothes and felt refreshed and civilized.

The possibilities of the cliffs were many and marvelous. He would seek out some cavity and make

himself a sleeping place, like a cliff-dweller. He contemplated and investigated; he compared and examined. At length he thought the south wall best suited to his taste and use. It was perfect in its natural cavities, terraces, corridors and long, eroded balconies. Verily there was a hint of design in the long terrace, with overhanging roof of upright wall.

That nature had prepared a place so well suited to his wants was indeed fortunate. He would not have been greatly astonished had some ancient cliff-dweller come out from some of the tunnel-like openings and alcoves and bade him welcome. Here he would establish his headquarters and as a beginning he commenced to collect driftwood and dry branches and barks and toss them up on the terrace, which was fully ten feet above the bed of the dry river.

Wood, water, shelter, shade and scenery, but nothing to eat. The accessories, but not the principal. In this emergency how his perplexed soul did covet a gun and the skill to use it.

What were Greek and Latin flummery to the solid, bed-rock essentials of self-subsistence? Ah! Yes; John had acquired at school one proficiency, which would now become available. He was an expert baseball pitcher.

With boundless satisfaction he looked upon the possibilities of his new abode. Something like a sense of ownership gladdened his heart. He felt a thrill of home and pride of possession. None but the homeless, disinherited poor can understand this joy to its

uttermost. A home for the homeless is like respect to the outcast, fallen. It is to live indeed.

The terraced wall, with high, overhanging roof, the pebbly pool, bubbling and overflowing its sparkling waters, making a trail of moisture far down the gravel-covered canyon, while up beyond the pool a few rods the walls made a bend, like the windings of a brook. Here was an opening in the south wall, or high, steep bank, as though made by the hand of man. It was wide, smooth and sloping gradually down to the dry bed of the truant river. It was an old buffalo run. The buffalo were gone, but the trail remained, a monument and a memorial, while bones, skulls and horns of buffaloes told of crowdings and catastrophe; a poet's paradise—bones and skulls, into which his fancy breathed life and legends of romance.

The long-roofed terrace, with its alcoves and recesses, filled John with wonder. It was so like a work of art. The terrace ended before reaching the old buffalo run, where the upright walls were without large holes or openings. This made the terrace, with its overhanging roof, more like a balcony than a washed-out indentation.

John looked longingly up toward that natural roof and floor, but how was he, a lame man, to reach that cliff house? It puzzled him that nature should make a dwelling so suitable and convenient. The whole looked like the work of man, as if fashioned by design. John was staggered.

Moreover, the north cliff, or side wall, was not without its strange formation. The upright face of the

cliff-like bank was smooth and without many seams or markings. There was one deep opening, like the mouth of a tunnel. It was fully twelve feet above the level of the ground below. It was like an open entrance, or arched doorway. When the sun shone in upon it then it seemed the outer opening of a deep, dark tunnel. There were a few large stones lying near the opening, but that was all that was revealed. John was sorry it was inaccessible, as he longed to explore its mysterious depths.

But the south terrace—he was sure that could be reached lower down, where it grew narrower and finally ended. He retraced his steps, going down about twenty rods, where the terrace ended by a large pile of rocks and stone. John rearranged and replaced the rocks, making stepping stones, if not a partial stairway. It was high enough so he could clamber up without much trouble. He reached the terrace and walked back on it as far as the upper edge of the pool, where the terrace ended. Here, in a small alcove, he located his sleeping apartment. He brushed out the alcove, replaced the stone, as if to make a screening wall. This completed the bedroom. He would find dry grass for his bed and toss the bundle up on the terrace.

As he was making his way back down from the terrace he noticed, near the lower end, a pile of stone that appeared to be put up with some kind of mortar. He examined it closely. It was a primitive stone oven, or stone stove and oven combined. He wondered at the art and ingenuity of the dead and de-

parted aborigines. They and the buffalo were gone, but the run and the oven remained, a relic and a reproach. John was an enthusiast and an idealist, a visionary poet and not a practical crusher of nations and empires for selfish greed and gain. He held many opinions not shared or favored by the ruling majority of his countrymen.

Alas; an oven but nothing to put in one! He thought of the matches and the "rattlesnakes" and shuddered. This thought was like cold water thrown on his glowing imagination. It cooled his enthusiasm. He started and gasped for breath.

He was growing hungry, for he had walked far and it was afternoon. His hand went down to his pocket in quest of the remaining bread and meat. He took it out, looked at it with hungry eyes, but put it back in his pocket, knowing from frequent past tilts with hunger that starvation must be met with prudence and self-denial. He was nerving himself for the onslaught.

Descending from the terrace by the stone steps, he gathered bundles of fine, dry grass and tied them around with long grasses. He hurled the bundles up near his sleeping alcove, ready to spread out for his bed. This done he drank, filled his canteen and walked off up the old buffalo run to look around and see what was beyond. He was careful to mark his way by bending and breaking twigs. He was growing cautious, if not altogether observing.

After passing through the timber he found the land rolling, barren and of whitish appearance, like lime or soda. He tasted the white stuff, expecting to find

it alkali, but it was salt. He collected some in his handkerchief and went on to inspect what looked like a dry lake or extensive reservoir. It was an old buffalo wallow. The bottom was still moist, for the ground was springy. Having retraced his way without difficulty he returned to the pool, bathed his swollen knee, which he wrapped in some large green leaves, held in place by soft green grass. He made his way back up on the terrace. He shook out his grass, making up his bed to his liking. Being tired, sleepy and hungry, he lay down to rest, if not to sleep, though it was little after four o'clock by the sun.

The bed was nice and soft. He had slept soundly on many worse. But he could not sleep. He was too ravenously hungry. Besides his mind was too active planning some means of subsistence, while his many trials, sorrows and blunders were clamoring for review. At length he had a happy inspiration—that his good luck in finding water and shelter should be celebrated in some way. He resolved to celebrate the happy event by eating his last remaining food, which he did, deliberately and thankfully.

He went back to bed and was soon sleeping soundly. The night before he had not slept. Now he was making up lost time. For more than two hours he slept a heavy ,dreamless sleep. Then he awoke startled and trembling.

It was still daylight—not more than half-past six o'clock, yet the whole air in the canyon was vibrating, throbbing, palpitating and quivering. Dark shadows of hideous, vampire-like objects darted and shot across

the sun-lighted walls. Strange and unknown sounds smote his affrighted ears. Was the canyon haunted or the resort of prehistoric monsters?

His heart was beating wildly. Tremors and chills ran up and down his spine. Luckily he thought of Sunflower, her nerve, grit and self-control. This roused and strengthened his will. He rose up resolutely and stepped out on the terrace. He looked up and down the canyon and laughed, as well he might, for down by the pool were hundreds of drinking, wading, dancing, flopping, flying, fighting turkeys.

The question of subsistence was solved. The baseball pitcher could throw a stone. Four dead turkeys were proof that his hand had not lost its cunning. Excited, he ran off down the terrace to secure his game. In his eagerness he forgot to limp or take his staff. He tossed the four turkeys up on the terrace by the stone oven. Gathering more driftwood, which he also threw up, he soon had a fire roaring and heating the oven. This art he had learned from a German neighbor, little thinking it would be of use to him. Now it was of more use to him than all his Greek and Roman rubbish.

While the oven was heating he dressed the four turkeys. Three were rubbed with salt and placed in the hot stone oven to bake. The fourth, being young and tender, he cut up and broiled over the coals, making a hearty meal. The three roast fowls would be ready for the next day. Having satisfied his hunger he went back to his bed. Sleep came soon, for he was weary.

Even the mournful, blood-curdling howls of the famished coyotes did not disturb his slumbers. The wolves scented the cooking meat. They smelled blood. They came up and around the pool and howled hideously. Owls screeched, bats whirred and grated their teeth, nighthawks whirled, circled, whizzed and whirred through the canyon, mosquitoes came and spent the night in blood-sucking revelry. Through all John slept on as though all nature was also enjoying a well-earned rest.

CHAPTER VII.

With a flint every day John made a deep, long scratch on the sandstone wall. He counted the marks. There were fifteen. No one came to his rescue. He no longer looked for them to come. He had long since ceased to hope for outside help. He must help himself or remain a hermit for a long time.

The Darlings must be well on their way to Arizona, doubtless glad to be rid of the company of such an idiot. At least so thought John, in his lonely bitterness. He was not on good terms with himself. He was sure he had acted like a born fool, like a braying burro. Sunflower must loathe and despise him. Her big brothers doubtless had their guns loaded for bear. The manager at the Artesian Wells was fully avenged, for John had long since become fully persuaded that the ranchman had been both patient and honorable. It was this conviction which annoyed John and made him on bad terms with himself.

John decided he would soon start on foot to California and go through alone. His lameness did not trouble him much. He no longer used a staff. He would start in a few days, as it was growing cooler and the sands were less scorching. By looking at the sun and heavenly bodies he found the points of the compass. The north star should be his guide. That

he was turned around he had schooled himself to forget and re-learn the right directions. In this he had succeeded. In his many strolls and rambles he had found many wild plums and wild grapes. These, with unfailing turkey, left little to regret.

The evening of the fifteenth day John was sitting on the terrace waiting for the turkeys, as they always came before going to roost. The turkeys came down, as usual, cautious, alert and skulkingly suspicious, like the Indian himself, but when once arrived at the pool the pow-wow began in fine style. But a new enemy was lurking in wait. Several coyotes crept stealthily in upon them. Instantly the air was seething with flying, flopping, frantic turkeys. Many, in their fright and panic, flew crashing against the rocky cliffs and fell back, stunned, into the very jaws of the red-mouthed devourers.

John, forgetting his own deadly designs, tried to rush down the terrace to club off the rival destroyers, but before he had gone twenty steps he was struck by a flying, panic-stricken turkey and whirled against the wall. However, he grabbed the turkey by the leg and held it captive. Another turkey flew wildly against the rocks by John's head and dropped down stunned and helpless. John grasped it by the head, thus securing two live birds, which he tied together with some strong grass withes and tossed them over into his bedroom alcove for further use.

Nevertheless the wolves surpassed him in deadly greed, notwithstanding he hurled many admonishing rocks down on their merciless heads. Finally they

fled, each carrying a captured turkey by way of warlike indemnity.

John hastily descended. He gathered up the dead and helpless turkeys and piled them in a heap. They had most all killed themselves in their frenzied panic by striking in mad flight against the upright canyon walls. This impact had killed many and wounded more.

John selected such as suited him best—six fat, plump hen turkeys. These he cast up on the terrace wall, leaving the others piled up together, a mass of flopping wings, kicking feet and quivering bodies.

He lighted his oven fire, which he always kept laid and ready. Soon he had the six turkeys skinned, drawn and stuffed with plums and grapes, ready to stack up in the hot oven to roast. The turkeys were very fat, as the timber was alive with grasshoppers.

After the sun went down John saw many creeping, skulking, dark shadows. They were the wolves carrying off the slain and disabled. He let them do their work unmolested.

The six fat turkeys in the oven were a sight which gave John much satisfaction. He contemplated them with elation, if not masculine vanity. He wished in his heart that Sunflower could see that ovenful of turkeys. Then she might have a higher opinion of his manly worth and enterprise and talk less proudly of the great things done by her brawny brothers. Verily John had a few, if not more, masculine traits, proclivities and ear-marks.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was long after midnight—almost morning—when John awoke from a sound sleep with a start and a thrill of alarm. His reason doubted his sense of hearing. He hastily crept out from his alcove and stealthily looked out from the terrace up toward the old buffalo run. His eyesight verified and confirmed his sense of hearing, for there certainly was a loaded wagon and several horsemen coming down toward the spring pool. They seemed excited and in much haste.

If they had arrived at any other time of day or night John would have welcomed them with shouts of gladness, but he was learning caution, if not wisdom. He silently chose a position of observation and concealment, a place where he could hear if not see all their movements. Suspicion and distrust were sentiments newly and recently developed in the breast of John Martindale. Nevertheless they were the masters of the situation, to which every generous impulse yielded submission. John Martindale doubting, questioning and distrusting the motives of his brother men was a new departure. He was more astonished at himself than at the sight down by the pool. Instinct often takes us under her protecting wings when reason would lead us into danger.

The men were loud-voiced, using language quite forcible if not altogether elegant. They were bright, energetic Americans. Of this John was certain. They might be even educated adventurers. They certainly were not ordinary travelers nor prospectors.

As they halted around the pool one lighted a lantern and made some hurried examinations, which were satisfactory, for he said, confidently: "All right, boys; everything O. K."

Then they stripped off the harness and unsaddled the horses, leading them to the pool to drink. The horses seemed suffering from thirst and overdriving. There was something strangely familiar in the faces and forms of these men. However, in the dim and uncertain light John was unable to place them or recall anything definite. Still, he was sure he had seen them somewhere, under different conditions.

They were all decently dressed, clean-shaven, well-featured and of large, athletic proportions; fine specimens of physical manhood.

John listened intently to catch every word. They used many terms and phrases which were to John vague and ambiguous. Notwithstanding their strangely figurative language he was shrewd enough to guess that these men were fugitives, if not outlaws and evil-doers. One whom they called "Deacon" seemed an authorized leader. He gave his orders with military certainty. He called out distinctly, if not pompously: "Uncle Collis, you picket the horses out on the grass. Bring them in the timber at daylight. Uncle Sam, you attend to the commissary and freight.

Shepherd, you feed your flock. Open the box of crackers, fry ham and make coffee, while you, Dynamite, can air out your Castle and after breakfast run the wagon off down the canyon and blow open the safe."

At the name "Dynamite" John started back aghast, quivering with direful apprehensions. His heart seemed to leap up in his throat and a faint and sickening sensation made him stagger backward, tripping over his staff, which swept off a few small stones and pebbles, that fell rattling down from the terrace.

"What's that?" said the Deacon in suppressed tones, alert and suspicious.

"Only an owl that we have started up," answered the Shepherd with calm assurance. "I saw it fly over our heads just now."

John breathed more freely. At least they had not discovered his presence. For this he was unspeakably thankful. He continued to listen, although half of the width of the canyon was out of range of his vision. At length he had a good view of the man called Dynamite. John recognized him as one of the tramps in the cattle car—the one who tore up his last shirt for rags to wrap around John's sore feet. Yes; it was Dynamite, and he also recognized the others as late comrades. But where was the Unterrified? He was not with these, for there were but five.

Although they had ridden together in the cattle car, still John had no intention of renewing the acquaintance. Nine horses; a loaded wagon; a safe to be blown open. What did it all mean? John, like all man-

kind, thought the worst, the most atrocious deeds possible. What is imagination for if we must confine ourselves to facts? Facts are slow, common things and sometimes beyond our grasp. But a ready imagination does not heed such trifles as facts. The free-hand drawing of imagination is often a thing impossible and absurd. Nevertheless many go to imagination rather than take the trouble to learn the facts in the case.

John imagined these men had Sunflower somewhere concealed in that loaded wagon. He looked to see her dragged out, a miserable victim of man's descent from the tadpole. But the facts proved that no captive maiden was anywhere in all the boxes and bundles. One sin was taken from their door, inasmuch as Sunflower was elsewhere.

One thing John observed was the pains taken by the driver to get the wagon near the opposite cliff and leave it standing directly under the tunnel-like opening. There must be some reason why the wagon was left in that particular position. John could see every movement around the wagon. He waited impatiently the opening and airing up of the Castle; nor had he long to wait.

Dynamite took the lantern and hung it on his arm. He and the Deacon climbed up on top of the loaded wagon. The Deacon stood on top of the highest box, leaning one shoulder hard against the smooth wall. Dynamite sprung up on his shoulders; then with a quick movement vaulted from the Deacon's shoulders into the mouth of the tunnel-like aperture.

Dynamite took the lantern in his hand and looked around eagerly. He seemed satisfied, for he called down to the other: "All right." As Dynamite moved on and around, John could see by the lighted lantern that the tunnel was also a corridor, for Dynamite was moving some loose stones that were piled up against what seemed a secret doorway, as he was tossing the stone back with unusual vigor. Having removed most of the stone, he placed his body against what seemed the solid wall. It yielded. A portion swung inward, as though hung on pivots. Carrying the lantern, he disappeared in what seemed a room. He left the swinging door open, as if to air out the Castle. Soon a flat stone swung back from the face of the cliff and the light gleamed out across the abyss for a moment, then disappeared; yet the dark, mouth-like opening remained. Three other openings of different form and higher position were left like dark spots or patches on the lighter surface of the upright wall or ledge.

Then the shadowy form of Dynamite was visible on the summit of the canyon wall. He called down to the men cheerfully, if not proudly: "All right; go ahead."

At this they all sprung to moving a pile of stone from the base of the canyon wall, some fifty feet further up in the bend of the wall. They cleared the stone from a space about six feet wide, leaving the stone piled at the side, like two stone piles instead of one, as at first.

When this was done the men stood around as though

waiting the final action in opening up the Castle. Nor had they long to wait. Soon a slow, grating sound was heard; then a part of the seemingly solid wall commenced to move, or rather swing outward, like a door. It was so adjusted on pivots that standing open, at right angles to the walls, it made an opening as large as a closet door. Moreover there were cracks running off and away from the opening, made with such art and tracery that no eye could find the doorway by the cracks in the wall. John felt sure the whole work was done by skillful engineers and not by the ordinary clumsy cliff-dwellers.

Dynamite stood smiling in the doorway. By the light John could look into this apartment, which was about twenty feet square. The room was empty, save a long standing ladder, which doubtless led to the upper rooms. True, there were a few stone seats and what might be used as a stone table. The lantern was left standing on the primitive stone table.

Uncle Collis had returned from picketing the horses and assisted the others in shoving back the wagon up by the now open Castle door, where they unloaded all save two large trunks and the unopened safe. The two trunks looked like those immense affairs used by traveling clothing men to carry around their samples. One thing is certain, they were too large to pass in through the Castle doorway. The Deacon unlocked them with a hatchet, smashing in the tops without regard to future use. Then they yanked out the stock of ready-made goods and threw them into the store-

room in a confused mass of pants, coats and vests of all sizes and colors.

It was daylight when they sat down by the wagon to eat breakfast, which the Shepherd had cooked by an outdoor wood fire. They used one of the broken trunks for a table, on which were placed tin plates, cups, knives and forks. They used boxes and stones for seats. When they were seated they fell to devouring ham, crackers, cheese and canned goods as though they had worked hard and fasted long.

Dynamite was talkative. He seemed the only one familiar with the Castle and its appointments. The others appeared to be making their first visit to Castle Canyon, as they called the place. They asked many questions and seemed delighted with so retired a retreat; not that they were so fond of natural scenery, but for other reasons of personal potency.

The hot coffee, the ample breakfast or the old associations of the Castle—something made Dynamite communicative, if not confidential. His mind seemed to go back to the past and linger fondly on its scenes and exploits. Moreover, the others were interested and encouraged him by questions and profound attention. His voice was clear and penetrating, with a metallic ring and a magnetic thrill, pitched like the voice of a popular stump speaker. In fact, persuasion and the arts of oratory were a natural gift to this son of social rebellion. He was saying, in his best oratorical strain: "I can tell you, boys, things have changed in the last twenty years. Those who work their games inside of the law, within the statutes, are

on top, loaded with plunder. Those who work outside of the law are down to the bottom, stripped to the last shirt.

"I tell you things have changed, even in the last ten years. The train industry has been overworked and overdone. It has petered out. It grows unprofitable and doubly dangerous. Now, there was our first Deacon, he who planned and engineered this Castle and the decoy works over on the opposite wall —bossed and put through the whole job. He was a real taking evangelist. He taught the traveling public to give to those who ask—at the muzzle of his contribution-persuader. He would pass through a car taking up the offerings right and left, bowing and smirking, with the bland smile of a real orthodox deacon. Meantime I would blow open the express safe, swipe in the needful and ride off to the next camp meeting. Oh, those were glorious days for us circuit riders. But things are changed. A greater and a safer scoop has discounted our methods—a 'survival of the fittest.' We are passing away like the Indian and the buffalo. The ruthless thirst of civilization drank up their blood and is now thirsting for our gore. Alas for the dear old Deacon! I can almost see him now, passing down through the aisle, beaming and bowing to the sisters as they toss their purses and jewels into his gunnysack, a cocked pistol in each hand and a bowie knife or two in his belt. I tell you he had an eloquent, taking way with him. He was a picturesque figure. He made traveling exciting and worth a man's while.

"Alas, poor old Deacon! One night he went to sleep in the very act of passing around the sack, taking up the offerings. Oh, that was a terrible night for experiences! I led the choir. I went around to the back door to come into the express car. I had singers with me to tend to the musical part of the meeting. We were having a real refreshing time, everything going on according to programme, when down rushed the engineer from his engine and shot down my three musicians and wounded me in the arm, leg and shoulder. Who do you suppose that engineer was—that engineer who broke up our meeting? I will tell you. It was the Unterrified himself. That was where he first was called the Unterrified. I escaped by the skin of my teeth by a backward jump into outer darkness. I was mad with pain. The devil seemed putting up a job. In my fury I hurled dynamite on the old engine and made a run for life. The old engine went up, but the engineer had gone down by the Pullmans. As I was running to reach the horses (we had hitched them ready for the home run) I saw a man ahead of me, fleeing with a large grip in his hand. I called to him to mount and ride wild for his life. He answered me in a strange voice, for we were in outer darkness, saying: "I'll give a hundred dollars for a horse; no questions asked." At this I knew he was some boodle passenger getting away with his loot—going out before the contribution was taken up—a thing never permitted at our meetings. I was mad as a wounded grizzly. I knocked him down with my gun, snatched his grip

from his hand. You see, I was bound to have a souvenir of some kind. I looked back at the lighted train. There I saw the old Deacon throw up his hands and fall as that unterrified engineer shot him through the car window. The meeting was out. I heard some one call out: 'Dynamite!' I answered: 'To the Castle!' which was our command for retreat.

"I untied two or three of the boys' horses to make a blind trail, mounted my own horse and rode away. You bet that was tall riding. The boys' horses followed, tearing, snorting and riderless.

"I rode all that night as though Satan was after me. The riderless horses kept me company—a hot, wide trail for bloodhounds to follow.

"Near daylight I rode up to a ranch barn, swiped four grain sacks, tied them over my horse's feet, while the other horses were eating and drinking. I put my feet in bags and stole silently away from the riderless horses, leading my own out around a bit of wire fence. Remounting I rode off, leaving the riderless horses to their own guidance. I heard them whinny and neigh, but would not let mine answer.

"All that time I kept that fool's grip in my hand or tied to my saddle. You see it was all I had to show for service.

"After sunrise I reached a lonely strip of timber. I rode on in its concealing shade, slower, of course, which was almost like stopping to rest, which I did once by a creek. I let my horse eat grass while I picked a few berries, for I was growing hungry.

"I knew every foot of the country. I chose the most

lonely pathway. I removed the grain sacks from my horse's feet and burned them, as well as a few square miles of prairie.

"Toward night I picketed my horse and went on a bit and covered myself up with dry grass and slept an hour or two, sound as an infant. At sundown I mounted and rode in through the more settled parts. I was making ready for the long, hard home run.

"About midnight I stopped at a farmer's barn. There were two horses in it. I turned them out on the range, fed and watered my horse, cut up a grain sack and tied over my horse's hoofs, put some on my own feet, led out my horse, mounted and set fire to the barn and rode silently away.

"The bloodhounds lost my trail. I rode all that night. In the morning I took off the feet cloths and again set fire to the prairie, which I soon left flaming far behind.

"I rode, circling about and around, fully three hundred miles. My horse dropped down dead before I reached the Castle. I made the rest of the way on foot; famished, wounded, alone and that miserable gripsack my only prize.

"I opened the Castle, ate myself sick, bound up my wounds and waited for some of the boys to come here. There were eight of us. I saw four all dead. But the other three; where were they? I waited around here, alone, for a month, for my wounds were troublesome.

"Just to think, all that work, trouble and loss for one old brown grip! I had no heart to touch or open the accursed thing. One day when I was getting over

my wounds I mustered up spirit enough to open the old thing. It was crammed, rammed, jammed full of —what do you boys guess?"

"Dirty shirts," drawled Uncle Sam.

"Tracts and hymnbooks," laughed the Shepherd.

"Nightshirts and silk underwear," said the Deacon.

"Snide stock and maps of mines," sighed Uncle Collis.

"No, gentlemen; you are all off. That grip was filled with greenbacks—more money than all our offerings collected outside of the law; a cool half million dollars; not a bill less than five hundred dollars. I tell you it made me feel bad to look at all that money and none of the boys here to rejoice or share with me."

"Don't grieve any more about that," put in Uncle Collis, cunningly. "We are with you now. We will gladly share your bounty. We will thankfully receive your generous, noble, brotherly bounty," continued Uncle Collis, in a purring, artful, insinuating voice.

"I intend to do the square thing by you boys. I told you this when I tried to hold you off from this last call," said Dynamite, reproachfully. "That comes on later," continued the safe-opener, with interest in the story he was telling. "Now about that satchel filled with greenbacks. I learned afterward that a great promoter of swipes within the law was found dead in the weeds near the wreck of the shattered engine. He had been struck by something in the side of the face, near the temple. Although no bit of the

wreckage was near him, yet the inquest gave the verdict 'Killed by the explosion.'

"They further stated that the promoter had been east selling watered railway stocks and snide bonds of salted gold mines; a worthy citizen, lamented by his victims and the admiring public," sneered Dynamite in bitterness.

"What did you do with the money?" asked Uncle Collis, not without interest.

"Oh, I used a few thousand. The remainder is here all right enough. It was part of this money I offered to give the Unterrified if he would help us wreck a passenger train. I did not expect him to do it, but I wanted to sound him on that point. I have a good standing offer of twenty thousand dollars, by the 'push,' if I will or can mix him up in some atrocious crime and hand him over to the clutches of the law. But now that he is one of us—a Lily of Solomon—I would not betray him for all the wealth of the plutocracy. Nevertheless I was curious. I wanted to test the power of money and try the worth of his manhood, now that he is blacklisted and reduced to beggary. Boys, do you bring to mind how he scorned and mocked my offer—even ordered us to leave the track, as though he were old Huntington himself? How he threw up his head and sniffed and snorted as though he would spit on us in his loathing? He, a vagrant, a hobo, a vagabond, a jailbird, a worker on rockpiles and in chain gangs, yet at heart a loyal railroader through and through; the same old unterrified

engineer that wiped out our gang and made the train industry stale and unprofitable.

"Boys, just think of it; mocking and spitting on a hundred thousand dollars that was coming your way; coming begging to you to take it in your hands! Oh, but he did walk off with his nose in the air, as proud and haughty as a lord.

"I tell you, boys, train robbing has played out. It is even worse played out than that ancient and once respectable industry, slave trading, or piracy on the high seas."

"But you are going to 'divvy up' with us. I know your generosity too well to doubt that," interrupted Uncle Collis, anxiously, if not coaxingly.

"I told you I would give you all a share, but I shall not divide with you. I am still waiting for the two who are missing. I divide with them. It is of my own part I shall give you a share—under certain conditions," declared Dynamite, with great positiveness. "Yes, you must remember I shall make conditions and as a Lily of Solomon your oath will be given and taken. But let us," continued Dynamite, "open this last safe and see what we have here. I can open it in three minutes."

At this they all sprung up, laughing, from their rustic table and pushing the wagon off down the canyon, beyond the range of John's outlook and also beyond his hearing.

While they were gone John fixed himself up in a way to see and hear and not be seen. He scattered his grass bed around on the terrace promiscuously,

reserving some of the finest and brownest to cover over his prostrate form, to hide him from view in case some of them took it into their heads to come up on the terrace. From his outlook he had a full view of the pool and the greater part of the surrounding canyon.

An explosion, which thundered, echoed and re-echoed against the rocky walls, told how Dynamite deserved his name. John could hear the men running down to see what was in the safe. Soon there went up a howl of derision, yells, hoots and Apache war-whoops, mingled with shrieks and shouts of laughter. In a few minutes the men came back to finish their breakfast. They were soon seated, pouring coffee, as if to begin breakfast anew.

When the babel of profane disgust had somewhat subsided again the clarion voice of the safe-opener was heard, like a steam whistle above a clucking hen. He said with chilling disdain: "Three dolars and fifteen cents! Heavens, boys, let us send it back with our regrets. Thunder, what a sell! Five men laying low for a month; five men risking life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, all for three dollars and fifteen cents! It is atrocious! It is infamous! We ought to be sent over the road for a set of fools. I tell you common, cheap, vulgar, illegal robbery has played out, as well as the train industry. But to raid a village store, a country store, swipe nine horses, more or less, haul a safe fifty miles and then get three dollars and fifteen cents! 'What a fall, my countrymen, what a fall!'

"Now, boys, what do you say to playing the return-

ing prodigal farce; go back to the bosom of our families, back to respectability, back to society and to legalized boodle? What do you say to going into politics—games inside of the law; get a charter, a franchise; form a trust, syndicate or corporation, then rob and plunder the public in a genteel, respectable, lawful style? What do you say to this?"

"We are willing," "We are agreeable," "We are wid you, Paddy Flinn," "We are your huckleberry," shouted the others in discordant chorus.

"But before giving you each twenty thousand dollars I shall expect you to swear by the awful oath of our brotherhood," said Dynamite, firmly.

"What are the conditions?" asked the Deacon, demurely.

"The conditions are simple and few. You are to work inside of the law and work the public to the top of their bent; but never go outside of the law. There are blooming chances therein to rob, plunder and swindle in a legal, business-like manner. Henceforth and henceforward respectable knavery is to be your only field of operation.

"You may not believe it," asserted Dynamite, "but at a swing of a stone I can set you all up in some legal, polite way of robbery that will please the admiring public, without fear of bars, ropes or live wires. Now what do you say?"

"Yes," "Yes," "Yes," "Yes, by the great oath of the Lilies of Solomon," answered the four men eagerly.

"That is satisfactory," answered Dynamite, without emotion. "Now, Deacon," resumed the safe-opener,

"what will you do with twenty thousand dollars put down in your fist?"

"I will go to the Green hotel in Pasadena," answered the Deacon, as if dreaming of future splendor and plutocratic revelry. "There at the Green I shall take a fine suite of rooms, dress well, pose as a millionaire, marry an heiress and live fly ever after, like an exclusive aristocrat."

"All right, Deacon; you are up-to-date," said Dynamite, as if wonderfully pleased at his favorite. "Now, Shepherd, what will you do to gull and grill the suffering public?" demanded the benefactor.

The Shepherd looked sheepish, if not decently ashamed of himself. He hesitated, turned in his seat, stood his knife and fork on the ends of their handles on the table, as if to stiffen and strengthen his purpose and position. Yet still he hesitated.

"Out with it," urged Dynamite encouragingly.

"Well, if you must know, I suppose you might as well hear first as last. I shall study for an orthodox preacher. I can do it. I have the sad sweet, sanctimonious style. I have been Shepherd so long I should otherwise miss my flock. Besides, I have a real gift among the ewe lambs and my begging talents would find an ample field to exploit. You must remember my genius in getting 'hand-outs.' Such talents should not be hid under a bushel measure, but their light should shine out where it will do the most good. I feel called, like a good Shepherd, to continue around the sheepfold."

"You will be a daisy, a beauty, a fine wolf to let in

among the lambs," sneered the Deacon in infinite disgust. "You old rascal, give that up or I'll wipe the earth with you right here," continued the Deacon, with increasing wrath.

"Well, I will promise to go out of the country; go out as a missionary or stay here and open a saloon. Anything to suit the crowd," said the Shepherd, with careless indifference.

"Uncle Collis, it remains for you and Uncle Sam to tell your designs. Of course you two will act together, as you always have done, but what particular line of legalized plunder suits your long-trained talents?" questioned the benefactor, not without contempt.

Uncle Sam smiled. Uncle Collis looked at his chum and winked with a wise and wicked wag. They each answered as one man: "Bankers," and laughed a mirthless, dry ha, ha.

"National bank," continued Uncle Collis, with covetous greed. "That will be my end of the string —all interest and no taxes. Just give us twenty-five thousand apiece"—he added the five thousand as a hint for more, as he was artful as well as avaricious—"then Uncle Sam can look after the national bank while I start a savings bank not far away. He can let me have some of his first issue of bills to pay my savings bank depositors a fat per cent on deposits, as a bait for suckers. Then when the deposits make it worth while I run the cash over to Uncle Sam's shebang; then start a run on myself, suspend payment, bust up, go into hands of receiver. Honest Uncle Sam would make a

good receiver—a sort of a taking, endless chain. Glorious 'biz' all around, for I could go to another city, start a broker's bank and wipe out the depositors—world without end. Ah, what a field is open within the law for men of our mold! Genteel brain work is my best holt henceforth and forever. It lays out the country store swag and train industry ten to one. Go ahead, Dynamite, like a dutiful daddy, and set up your brood in fine shape. You will find us a credit to modern business methods, if not an honor to Castle Canyon itself; bright and shining lights in the firmament of cunning workers of the admiring public."

When Uncle Collis ceased speaking there was silence for a few moments, as though the joys of imagined wealth anticipation were more pleasing than any amount of idle talk.

At length the voice of the Deacon was heard asking what he himself would do. He answered almost without interest, saying:

"Oh, I may go into politics after awhile. They say I have a voice and a gift of gab and an intuitive knowledge of men. It turns my gorge to think of shouting and shrieking 'patriotism,' 'loyalty,' 'law and order' and 'Old Glory,' while in the meantime I am betraying the people, selling their rights, stealing their liberties and welding the chains of serfdom on the helpless hands of labor. No; I swear I am not equal to that kind of iniquity. I could rob an express safe of its money, but not a trusting constituency of their birthright. If I go into politics I shall represent the opposition.

"I guess I will go abroad for a few years, take my wife, son and daughter and travel around a little; perhaps buy a lord for a son-in-law, or some such cheap folly."

"Good for you, Dynamite!" shouted the others, admiringly. "Then you could spread the order of Lilies of Solomon among the do-nothing-useful snobs of Europe. Then as a Lily of Solomon you would be strictly in it. Why didn't you do it before?" inquired the Deacon, wonderingly.

"Why not do it before?" repeated Dynamite, with offended dignity. "I suppose if I tell you my reasons you may not sympathize with my scruples nor understand my motives. Honor among thieves is not obsolete, whatever it may be among politicians or business exploiters. If you will call to mind the night when our gang went to pieces through the agency of our fraternal enemy, the Unterrified, the blacklisted engineer, there were then eight of us. I saw four shot down. Another was afterward killed trying to escape. That leaves two unaccounted for, two missing. I escaped and have waited and searched for five years to find these two missing men, to divide up and disband.

"I advertised in ways known among ourselves, but have never heard one lisp from them. I read and re-read the account of the whole affair in many newspapers, colored red with reporters' ink; but not a word or hint as to the fate of the two missing men."

"Those two, who disappeared so timely, might have been detectives in disguise, who led you into the trap,"

said the Deacon, who was fond of finding out mysteries.

"Not much. You are off there, for they were both my own brothers, sons of my foxy old father."

"Perhaps they were both wounded and fled together, dying when they reached some rendezvous," said Uncle Collis, in artfully assumed sorrow.

"No; I visited all our stations and hiding places, but found no word or sign from them. They would have left some writing or word for me if they had been there."

"They may have thought you killed when the engine exploded," suggested the Deacon, the riddle guesser and puzzle worker.

"Perhaps that is the real reason, but I can tell if they have been here by examining the place where they kept their individual deposits."

"Do you really know where they hid their share of the spoil?" queried Uncle Collis, with cunning cupidity.

"Of course I do," replied Dynamite, with virtuous condescension. "We were no board of trade gang, to rob each other when outside victims grew shy. No, sir. We were square and loyal to each other; you can bet your life on that."

"Can't you go and see if they have taken their money?" pleaded Uncle Collis, with needless interest.

"Yes. You all remain here while I go into the Castle and look over the various deposits."

He went alone, entering by the lower door, which he wisely closed behind him, for Uncle Collis sprung

up to follow, spy or listen; but the Deacon yanked him back to his seat, frowning savagely.

In about twenty minutes Dynamite returned. He was radiant. He said, joyously: "They are alive. They have both been here. They have taken their own. They left this bit of paper for me in one of their vaults. I will read it to you:

" 'Dear Dyna: That was a black old night. I heard you call "Castle." The Kid and I made a dashing jump for liberty, but were both hit hard; but the darkness covered our persons. I kept close to the Kid. He was rattled and run wild. I overtook him and grasped his hand. When he knew who it was leading him he said he was faint from loss of blood or the shock. He fainted. I took him in my arms and carried him about ten rods till I came to a church. I took him up by a back door of the church. In three minutes I picked the lock and took him in, closing the door. He was bleeding freely, but the wound was one I knew how to manage. I worked over him all night. At the first flush of dawn I carried him up in the church loft; also some cushions for his bed. Then I went out to a well back of the church, pumped a pail of water, cleaned off all the blood spots, swiped the preacher's water pitcher and filled that and carried it up to the Kid.

" 'Poor as a church mouse means more to me, now that we lived there for four weeks. But I managed. You know our Spartan training taught us many useful things. Enough; at the end of four weeks we took the cars for Denver—honest shippers, looking after a

sale of stock. There we found friends and stayed three months, till our wounds were all right and the Kid fit to ride. Then we came down here, hoping to get some word from you, but found nothing, not a word nor a line, nor anything to show you had been here or had escaped. But the Kid says you surely have been here, as the dried figs are all gone and the stock of provisions has been opened and some used.

"'We take our share and two-thirds of the dead boys' pile, as we have a grand chance to join the sugar trust—big boodle and no fear of the law, bullets or hangman's rope.

"'If you are living you will surely come down here. Of this we are certain, so we leave your brain-money. Take our advice. Go into something fly that has law on your side, safe and sure. With your share and a third of the dead boys' pile you will have about a half a million. With that cash you can join some trust, syndicate or corporation and get brain-money more to the people's liking. I should advise the oil trust or some other sanctified cinch.

"'At the end of seven years we will come down again. If you have not been here then we will take all the valuables and blow up the Castle.

"'But the Kid will have it you have been here. If so you will come back again. He says you are too slow for fly snaps and advises government bonds, and avoid taxes. You have many bonds now and lots of coupons to cut.

"'You can find us at any time at the Palace hotel,

San Francisco. We are way-up society big bugs, high mucky-mucks. ARTHUR BROTHERS.' "

Dynamite read the letter in a loud, tremulous voice. When he had finished he said, smiling fondly: "The dear lads are somewhat free with their juvenile advice," and he laughed nervously.

However, he told his listeners that they all must leave the Castle within a day or two, as he wished to consult his brothers on important business matters. They all seemed willing and ready to go. Perhaps the thought of the twenty thousand apiece took away their desire for prolonged sylvan scenes.

During the partial silence which followed the reading Uncle Collis muttered audibly: "A half million and another half a million make a million dollars; then to give us, your pals and comrades, only a paltry twenty-five thousand each," grumbled Uncle Collis, with contemptible avarice. "I can't believe it. No true Lily of Solomon would treat us so shabbily."

"Hold on there, Uncle Collis," commanded Dynamite, in mock majesty. "You are going rather fast for the first visit to the Castle. Such speed is dangerous. Furthermore, I never said twenty-five thousand dollars. I said twenty thousand dollars. That is just nineteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents more than you would give to-day if you stood in my boots; so shut up your growling, or I may learn meanness from you and give you nothing."

"Oh, come, now, old fellow; can't you take a joke?" purred Uncle Collis, coaxingly. "We are all satisfied

with twenty thousand—more than satisfied. We are grateful. We are thankful. We are overwhelmed by your unheard-of generosity and fraternal nobleness. Of course a man of your make and mold could never let an old comrade go off into the swine-like world empty-handed. It is not like you to be stingy and greedy, like common, cheap, rich men. You could not lower yourself to their level; no, not if you tried. Nature gave you a great head and heart, whatever trips and slips you may have made. At heart you are a real true Christian gentleman; none of the Ananias breed, either; one of the pure and primitive brotherhood."

"There, that will do. Such wads and gobs of taffy make us tired of sweets. Nevertheless it does taste good to the natural mouth," said Dynamite, laughing good-naturedly.

"What might be taffy if given to others is less than the truth in your case," remarked the Deacon, admiringly.

"Don't, boys. You make me feel flat as a fool. I have never been used to praise or appreciation. I am not prepared to ward off things of that kind. It makes me sorry that I have not always been a good, just and worthy man."

"Anyhow, you can depend on our united support in all your political plots and plans. "We are 'yours truly,' as the letter-writer says," put in Uncle Sam, with oily fervor.

"We will also give you a turkey banquet to-morrow night," added Uncle Collis, gushing with good will

and desire to honor if not deceive. "Ah, yes; a banquet in honor of our distinguished benefactor. Bet your life it will be a swell function, as they say in society. Remember us when we get our banks started and come around and deposit a few thousand, just to give us a friendly starter."

"Come, come, boys," said the Deacon, drowsily. "Come; let us get ready for a good all-day sleep!"

CHAPTER IX.

With a thrill of gladness John saw them making ready for t heir all-day sleep. His prone and motionless position was growing painful. He had heard enough. He had listened to the side of the defendant. He had a second time beheld polite, complaisant society as pictured by the opposition; a leering, cowardly cartoon; a revolting travesty; Lilies of Solomon, forsooth a sweet-scented bouquet if they themselves were allowed to judge the merit of odors.

John wondered if the human race, from Adam down, were built on the plan of universal self-justification. Mankind made him weary. The human race would require untold centuries to understand or practice the simple first principles of Christ's Christianity. Churchanity they may practice and understand, but the sermon on the mount, to such, is a meaningless jingle of sweet-sounding generalities.

John, being a poet, caught a faint gleam of the grand and sublime truth contained and overlooked in that sermon. His grand and lofty ideal fell far short of reaching the standard of love and brotherhood, therein commanded. He was burdened and borne down by education and inherited tendencies. Nevertheless his spiritual eyes caught glimpses of unspeak-

able fraternal love, the love that is sacrifice and self-sacrifice.

There was in one remote corner of his soul a faint ray of divine enlightenment, a light not of this world, worldly, but a divine light, which he in his weak, erring way tried to follow. It was this divine light which led him off and beyond the beaten pathways chosen by the self-serving world. Still, fortunately he lived in an age when heretics ar not burned—only roasted or scorched by being branded cranks, fools, nihilists, anarchists and enemies of "law and order!" Poor John Martindale, with all his poverty and troubles, to be led off by divine lights and divine inspirations. How much the blind world should pity him will never be known, as they have no measure, no standard within themselves whereby to measure his unfortunate gift of seeing the divine truth by divine light. However, he was not utterly miserable. In his present painful condition he had the joy of seeing the men enter the Castle and draw the doors back inward. He felt assured that he should see them no more that day.

He rose to his feet, shook off the dry grass, brushing and shaking his clothes vigorously, congratulating himself that the gang had not discovered his presence. He took out his pocket mirror and combed the grass and hay from his waving hair, which he parted in the middlew ith great exactness.

He looked across the canyon to the silent Castle and sprung backward aghast, for over in the mouth of the tunnel stood Dynamite, shaking and dusting his blan-

kets, apparently without having seen or noticed John, who had continued silently to sink back out of sight. Finally the safe-opener, having dusted his blankets to his liking, wrapped them around him and lay down in the open tunnel, behind the stone removed from the side doors. After waiting for what seemed to John an hour or more he untied one of the captive turkeys and forcibly pushed it forward till it flopped and tumbled off, fluttering down from the terrace.

Dynamite rose up like one who has not been sleeping and looked down on the benumber, reeling, skulking turkey; but he did not seem to raise his eyes over where John was concealed. The safe-opener's curiosity being apparently satisfied, he again dropped out of sight.

After waiting another tiresome hour John set free the remaining turkey, which flopped and fluttered, flew and fell off down by the pool, without bringing dynamite again to the mouth of the tunnel.

John felt proud of his tact and strategem. Thinking himself unseen an dthe way clear, he took off his old shoes, carrying them in his hand. He tip-toed off down the terrace to the oven, where he secured a large quantity of roast turkey and hastened down to the lower watering place, where he drank and filled his canteen, going into the dense timber, where he ate at his leisure. After eating and drinking he thought of the notices fastened to the trees. He walked out and tore them down, lest the inmates of the Castle find them and learn his whereabouts. Having pulled

down quite a number and scattered the fragments he was confident and positively certain that at least one danger was averted. He strolled about through the timber till long after noon. Then he thought he would try his powers at trailing. He passed on and around over the canyon, down by the old buffalo run. Here he tried to trail the horses to where they were tied in the timber. Seeing tracks, he followed them, but they grew dim and confused. However, as he must pass the day away from the terrace, he wandered on without alertness or suspicion. At length he heard a low whinny, as a horse neighs at the approach of some person expected to bring feed.

John hurried dtoward the place. There, in a small, open swale, were five horses, securely lariated. He went up to them with some shyness. Yet one, a beautiful black, of which he had heard Dynamite speak, seemed an ideal saddle horse. He went up to her. She seemed both gentle and affectionate. John patted her neck, arranging her long, glossy mane. Here was a horse that John could love and admire. He was not in the least afraid of her. She seemed to like his caresses and attention. After petting and patting her neck he pulled fine grass and gave it to her. She ate it greedily, reaching out her head for more. To feed her; to vault on her back; to spring off lightly; then jump on again; how charming. Through all she stood patiently, as if expecting the word "Go."

Once, as he was on her back, leaning down to pat her neck, he thought he heard twigs or bushes rustle

or crack and break. He listened, still sitting astride the beautiful black.

Seeing nothing unusual, he dismounted and commenced to look her over, as he had seen horsemen, lifting her feet, rubbing down her legs, looking in her eyes and mouth, as though he were a jockey about to make a purchase. To him the other horses were ordinary bronchos. He gave them small attention, always returning to the trim black thoroughbred.

All at once John was seized with a wild, instinctive desire to mount the black mare and flee from perils, possible and probable. The temptation was mighty and masterful.

In the language of mercenary society, John had stolen a ride in an empty freight car, but the liberty of no person was thereby imperiled. No one was dispossessed of their property or goods. The car remained, having been put to getter use carrying God's poor children.

But to take this horse from men whose liberty was forfeit, by trespass, unforgiven by sinners, was to take away not only their property but the greater possession, their liberty as well. To these outlaws these horses meant more than the horses of honest men. No; he could not do this unholy, double crime. Reason and instinct made a battleground of his sensitive soul. They pulled, hauled, clawed and lacerated. Instinct, the flesh, the animal in man, rose up and clamored fierce and curious, saying to his soul, or his reason: "You are lame, far from the abode of men, with deserts and starvation besetting your pathway.

Fool, take this fleet horse from such as they and fly while you can from the clutches of criminals.

Then reason would answer: "No, no; not a horse thief. My liberty is not forfeit to the law which knows no mercy. My mother's son shall not steal from men—transgressing brothers, like those outlaws. To occupy an empty car of some rich, soulless corporation was not like taking the means of escape from one of God's trespassing children, whom we in our greed have not forgiven. Again instinct rose up in wrath, shouting decisively: "Fool! Madman! You know less than the eagle, the fox or the wolf. Self-preservation is the first law of nature." "Aye! Aye!" shrieked reason, "and the last law recognized by man."

John was almost frantic. His whole being was rent and torn by the terrible temptation of the fleet black mare. He walked away, going backward, with his eyes still gazing fondly on the beautiful black. He groaned aloud in his mental anguish: "Oh, this temptation; this awful temptation! God help me to resist! Oh, mother in heaven, direct me what to do!"

"Come here to-morrow night and it shall be revealed," answered a voice, sad, strange and sepulchral. John whirled around, looked wildly about, but saw no one. Then he ran off in the direction of the voice, but there was no person in sight. Neither was there track nor trace visible. He examined the ground, the leaves, the twigs, even the tree-tops; but not a sign nor indication that any person had ever visited the place.

Inasmuch as his ears had heard the voice and the words, now the question arose was it his bodily ears

or his spiritual ears that heard the command. He even thought his overwrought nerves might have deceived him, just as his imagination was always doing. Finally he concluded it must have been some kind of occult spiritual method of communication. He dallied and flirted with his temptation. He argued and reasoned and sometimes chose inclination as umpire. It was his first great spiritual battle. His conscience and moral sense of right resisted the fierce onslaught of nature and instinct. After a long and weary struggle instinct and inclination accepted a truce till the next evening, when the voice promised to reveal what he should do.

Having decided to wait, instinct and nature, like an artful enemy, went on with greater vigor, preparing for future assaults.

Poor John went slowly and sorrowfully back toward the lower pool, where he filled his canteen and waited for darkness. He felt a great desire to sleep again on the terrace, to listen and observe. He wanted to hear, if possible, how, when and which direction these men would travel. He might follow them at a distance and thus be able to find his way out of the wilderness.

He did not ascend the terrace till long after dark. All was quiet at the Castle; not a sign nor a sound to tell that it was ever inhabited.

CHAPTER X.

Next morning the men were active and early. John remained concealed beneath his grassy lookout, beside his rocky embrasure. He had chosen his position carefully. The lords of the Castle had captured a number of turkeys and were cooking them over an open wood fire down near the pool. The Shepherd seemed master of frontier methods. Everything was well and skillfully arranged. He asked Dynamite gruffly, if not tauntingly, where he kept that stone bake-oven, of which he had told them so boastingly.

John gasped and trembled; felt hot and cold by turns, while chills chased and raced up and down his spine. There were still three roast turkeys remaining in that oven. Dynamite answered in a careless tone: "It's tumbled down—no good any more."

"But where is it?" persisted the Shepherd, with obstinate singleness of purpose.

"Retired; gone out of business; in the hands of a receiver," laughingly answered Dynamite. John breathed more freely; that danger was averted. Meanwhile the scoffing, mocking, laughing Apollo whom they called Deacon had hurriedly taken his gun and game sack, going off up the canyon. Although John listened, he heard no sound of shooting. Neither

had he heard all that was said between Dynamite and the Deacon, who seemed intimate and to have some secret understanding or plans not shared wholly by the others. At least they trusted and assisted each other.

After a few hours the Deacon returned. His game sack was empty. His face had a weary if not troubled expression. He raised his hand to the four feasters, as if to command silence, saying, with startling abruptness: "Here is a pretty kettle of fish. There's a man lurking around here somewhere. I have been trailing him all the morning. He may be some mercenary city detective. He is fool enough to be one of those conceited kidlets, but he is not of that ilk. He was here before we came—a week or ten days. I found where he slept the first night. It was under the turkey roost, on a bed of dry grass that he gathered and carried there. That was more than a week ago. He was then very lame; favored his right leg. He used a big, long stick for a cane, or staff. However, he is now getting over his lameness, for he no longer carries a cane. Still, he favors his right leg."

Again the cold chills and shivers returned to John Martindale with added vigor. He expected the Deacon would soon point out his place of concealment and call him down to judgment.

"Well, that does beat all!" exclaimed Uncle Collis in alarm. "But you have got him down pat."

"Did you also learn his age, height, weight and color of his hair and eyes?" questioned Dynamite, coolly.

"Not exactly. Still, I can tell his height to an inch, the size of his feet and hands, the length of his coat,

the make of his shoes, where he is going, whose horse bucked him off, the name of the girl he is sweet on and a few more items of little interest," said the Deacon, with positive assurance.

"Whew! But you are a trailer, Deacon, and no mistake," put in Uncle Sam, admiringly, "or a marvelous mind-reader."

"Say, have you seen the man?" interrupted Uncle Collis, eagerly.

"Neither," answered the Deacon, defiantly. "There is where you are off. I simply read the signs he has left around here for my enlightenment. I put this and that together and complete the whole story.

"Furthermore, he is not a mature man. He is a green, unfledged gosling, with the shell still sticking on his back. He is that college cabbage that was with us in the cattle car, with the Unterrified. Blast his sickly, shivering hide! He lost us a through trip to the coast. He is the cause of more evil than I can count on my ten fingers. You needn't whistle nor say 'Rats!' I know what I am talking about. I have the proof here in black and white.

"You all know I went down to the Artesian Wells, with an eye to the horse department. I found they had a discouraging bulldog, who roamed at large in the night-time; already fetched down two men. I let out the job; went elsewhere. However, I spent the night with the cowboys, sleeping in the house and eating with them. They were all talking of the sad fate of a verdant lover, John Martindale, who was riding with the Darlings through to Arizona on his way to Cali-

fornia. They were all out looking for his body, or his maimed, starving, bleeding wreck. They said he was a poet, as though that was enough to doom any honorable man to perdition.

"The Darlings were old friends of the manager and he pawed up the dust to please them, or rather the sniveling Sunflower, who was clear daft on the lost Johnnie-sweet-love. It seems he and Sunflower were a pair of turtle doves, billing and cooing and lolligagging, till the Darling family were glad to escape the sickening flood of drool, drivel and soft giggles by letting the spoony ones ride on ahead, out of sight and hearing.

"Sunflower and Johnnie-sweet-slobber reached the Artesian Wells. There was no one at home. However, this Sunflower, who is not a bad-looking, freckle-nosed, red-headed little animal, went around, woman-fashion, peeking and prying and sticking her little freckled pug nose into other folks' business. She opened the bulldog's house without so much as rapping. He sprung out, knocked her over and showed her his fine set of long, sharp teeth. This so frightened her white-livered lover that he sneaked off and left her to her fate, while he rode off to find the cowboys to call off the dog. Away he rode like a fool and broke his pony's neck.

"When he came back the girl was not there. He ripped and tore and raved and raged, calling names and crimes without end. To get rid of the loony fool they gave him a bucking broncho. He rode off wildly and decently broke his own neck. At least the broncho

came back next day riderless, with bridle reins flying in fine shape. Then the girl, Sunflower, took her turn at raving and tearing around, weeping till her eyes were red as her hair. She kept the whole country stirred up and out hunting for the cadaver for five days and nights.

"Then Daddy Darling got on his ear and started off gayly for Arizona, taking the girl along with him, weeping and howling and yelling and shrieking back to the cowboys to hunt up the bones of the dear departed and plant them down deep in the cold, cold ground, I suppose to keep them from doing any more deviltry.

"Oh, the whole thing was a regular old circus. The cowboys just split themselves when they tell how that girl escaped the dog and gave her lover the slip.

"You see, it was a hot day, a real old Kansas hot-stuff wind. The girl kept quiet. The dog backed off into his shady kennel to watch her from out the open door; but a frolicsome Kansas zephyr came flirting around and slammed the door shut. The girl, who is no fool, jumped up and jammed the pin in place, fastening up the dog. She mounted her horse and rode back like a sensible girl to meet pa and the big brothers. Some said she rode off to find the pretty poet—the seraph of these sylvan shades."

"You don't mean to tell us that fellow is here," said Dynamite, with a great swell of wonder and incredulity. "Look here, Deacon, it is fully fifty miles from here to the Artesian Wells."

"Can't help it, Dynamite. He is here all the same.

I even trailed that callow kid back where the broncho bucked him off. I could see where he fell sprawling and pawing around, plowing up the ground as though a meteor had struck the sand. Nor is this all. I have other proof that he is here—proof written and signed by his own hand. I found this leaf from his diary pinned up on a tree with sharp sticks, which fastened it to the bark. There were other notices fastened to other trees, but he has since torn them down and scattered the fragments on the ground, like the sap-headed booby that he is.

"Here, one of you boys take this little flyer and read what the idiot says to his rescuers."

Dynamite took the paper, looked at it with care, if not interest, then read aloud:

"Mr. Darling, or those who come to my rescue: I am in the timber, somewhere near water. I am helpless; my leg and head injured. I am hungry, thirsty and will soon be starving. The thought of Sunflower's possible doom is driving me mad.

"JOHN MARTINDALE."

"How is that for proof, for a clincher?" shouted the Deacon, triumphantly. "Moreover, I saw the imprint of his foot and hand down by the lower pool; the whole imprint of his tapering fingers where he worked around in the slimy ooze, as well as where he laid his toothbrush when he combed out his wavy love-locks and left a few curly hairs to tell the tale of his dainty habits.

"Now, boys, what had we better do with the bird of ill omen?" continued the Deacon, in a loud, business-

like tone. "Shall we shoot him at sight, round him up and force him to join the Lilies of Solomon or chain him up in the Castle and leave him there in darkness to his well-earned fate?"

Poor John Martindale was cold and trembling. In imagination he felt himself being rounded up. Aye, more. He felt himself trying to dodge the unerring balls of their death-dealing guns. But the chilling, freezing agony of chains, darkness and starvation within the hopeless Castle was almost too much for reason to behold, even in fancy. He was so dazed and horrified that he let them talk on unheeded. He may have fainted. He never knew, save there was a blank after that until he heard the clear, penetrating voice of Dynamite giving orders and arranging the duties of the day.

The men were busy digging in the bottom of the canyon a long, narrow, deep hole in the pebbles and gravel. It looked like a grave. Was it meant for John Martindale? John felt sure it was meant to hide his bones. He imagined how they threw his quivering body down in the damp gravel and hurled down large stones, then the finer, smaller pebbles and smoothed the surface over with gravel.

Again he saw Dynamite approach the hole and suggest some changes as to width and depth. Uncle Collis was gathering and bringing in wood. John thought they meant to cremate his remains. Then he saw the pile of dressed turkeys and an antelope which Dynamite had lassoed while it was drinking the night before. They filled the pit with small wood. It was

soon a mass of raging flames, which the Shepherd continued to feed with more wood. Other fires were built, the big boiler containing a whole ham. They were heating great, flat stones in their side fires. Alas, poor John! He thought they meant to cover him with hot rocks, why and for what reason he could not imagine.

Then the voice of the Shepherd was heard saying: "I tell you, Dynamite, we will give you a fine old banquet and a barbecue thrown in for good measure. This pit will cook the whole lot of turkeys and antelope in fine shape."

Dynamite answered with a grand mock tragic voice: "This one day is sacred to my greatness; to me and my banquet. No skeletons at my feast, if you please. Let the wandering cherub alone for this my banqueting day, my festival. To-night it will be revealed what is to be done. So let the black mare rest today, for the night comes when the good men are feasting."

At these words John became soothed, if not wholly reassured. Some way he felt sure, almost certain that Dynamite, if not the Deacon, knew where he was concealed; one talking to terrify and torment, while the other gave him a timely hint when and how to flee.

He crawled backward within the friendly walls of the alcove, shook off the dry grass and rose to his feet. He was hungry and wet with cold sweat. He was not aware of the great mental strain he had passed through. Now it was all over and he felt like laughing at his unruly imagination.

He wondered at his own bodily timidity, for his mind, his soul or spirit was bold, defiant, even aggressive. John did not know, understand himself; nor is this strange; few people do. John's will power was not strong enough to grapple his quivering body and force it to walk forth defiantly and say to the Lilies of Solomon: "Here I am. Here is John Martindale. Work your will. Do as you like. Do as you think right by me."

No; he could not do this. Instinct would not let him rush out into needless danger. For some long, dreary hours John sat in self-abasement and self-conflict. However, through all there were mingled some radiant, blissful thoughts.

Sunflower was safe. Sunflower had wept. Sunflower had sought for him. Sunflower had mourned and grieved when she thought him mangled, dying and alone. Such sweet, rapturous thoughts could compensate for a world of bitterness. That the Darlings were on the road to Arizona made it impossible for him to join them. He would start alone; go as soon as darkness would let him leave the terrace. He became calmer after he had decided his future course.

Again he turned his attention to the men in the canyon below. He crawled out cautiously where he could look down and see as well as hear. Dynamite was there, the center of all activity and attention, whom all delighted to honor—a benefactor and a possible milch cow for future use. Human nature moves along the same old lines. Robbers or rulers, preachers or the public, the exceptions are few.

When Dynamite spoke all others were silent. They listened with interest, if not with absolute servility. Even John Martindale looked upon him without loathing or moral rancor. Notwithstanding this small-world homage, Dynamite remained cool and unmoved. He was telling them he must have four hours alone in the Castle to get out the money, ready to give each his twenty thousand dollars. At three o'clock he would come out by the pool and give each what he promised, together with a lot of watches and jewelry for them to raffle among themselves.

The men were willing he should go, and go alone. Besides, he handed them out a bottle of Old Bourbon to drink his health and happiness. He went into the Castle and closed the lower door, as well as the tunnel side door.

In the meantime the men were busy preparing for the banquet. They suggested a band of music and a street parade, but decided that such frills might please women and children, but as these were absent they would omit this part of the usual programme. But they resolved that the barbecued turkeys and antelope should be a success, as well as the plum pudding and fancy fixings that the Shepherd was evolving from their ample stores—a function worthy of the honored guest.

No one came near the terrace. This was encouraging. John seemed to share the joy of the men below. They were merry, but not intoxicated. They often glanced up at the sun to learn if it was nearing three o'clock. At half-past two Dynamite came to the

mouth of the tunnel and called down to the men. He told them he had found everything in good order—far better than he expected. He took out his watch, telling them the time. He suggested to them that they had better water the horses and picket them around near the old buffalo trail, in that bit of fresh grass, as they would be too busy raffling off the watches and spreading the banquet to fool around with horses after three o'clock.

At this Uncle Sam and Uncle Collis started off on the run to lead the horses down to water, while the Deacon and the Shepherd continued the preparations for the great banquet. They covered up the roasting meats; they looked after the baking and boiling, punching up the fire and adding fuel.

At three o'clock to the minute Dynamite came out from the lower door, bringing four small parcels over his arm. John noticed he was in his shirt sleeves, as though he had been working hard in a warm place. Another glance told him the shirt was a new woolen one, different from the one he wore when he went into the Castle. John thought he must have changed in honor of the banquet.

Dynamite, smiling, told the boys to fall into line, which they did in the best of humor. He handed each a package, telling them to count and see if the amount was correct. All answered in the affirmative save Uncle Collis, who counted and recounted his money several times, shaking his head doubtfully and going over the bills again. At length he said, sadly:

"I don't know, but I think I am out a thousand dollars. Here, Dynamite, you count it yourself and see."

Dynamite waved the package back, telling Uncle Collis to look down between his shirt and pants for it, as he saw it slip in there while he was shuffling over the bills. Uncle Collis fished out the bills and seemed greatly surprised to find them down there, yet had tact to pass it off as his own blundering carelessness. They were all too self-absorbed to give much heed to Uncle Collis. His attempted cheat passed without much comment.

Thanks, cheers, hurrahs, handshakings and something that looked very much like hugs and kisses followed in rapid succession.

When the tumult subsided Dynamite gushingly told them to all go up in the third story of the Castle, where they would find on the stone table a half-bushel of gold watches, rings, bracelets and breastpins, which they were to divide among themselves by raffling or throwing dice. With a whoop and yell they all rushed off toward the Castle door, while Dynamite shouted, saying: "Call me when you are through. I want to see who scoops in the pile. I will take a walk, a little stroll off through the timber, and see what that kid is doing and pick some flowers for the table."

But the men disappeared before he finished speaking. As the last one ascended the inner ladder Dynamite rushed up to the Castle door, hurled out a pile of things, then pushed the door shut, rolling three large stones up against it.

Then he ran swiftly across to the terrace and tossed

up a pebble, saying in a half-whisper: "Hello, there, John Martindale. Now is your time. Come on."

John sprung to his feet and looked down into the face of Dynamite, the tramp who had torn off his last shirt for rags to bind up John's blistered feet in the cattle car. One glance into his face was enough. John trusted him utterly. Instinct told him to trust himself to the guidance of this outlaw.

Dynamite understood the glance, for he said, smiling: "Jump; I will catch you." John obeyed without question.

"There, take that saddle, bridle, roll of blankets and bag of crackers and come with me."

But what astonished John was to see Dynamite yank the hot, boiling ham from the kettle and drop a raw ham in its place, wrapping the hot ham in a flour sack, while he caught up a coat, hat and a number of canteens, which he plunged down in the pool and filled. He passed John before they were at the top of the buffalo run.

"What, are you going with me?" asked John in an excited whisper.

"Yes; it seems so," answered Dynamite, calmly.

"But the banquet," exclaimed John in wonder.

"That is my one opportunity. I have been making up my pack and carrying things around near the old trail for the last three hours."

When they reached the horses John was told to gear up the black mare for himself, while Dynamite led a stocky little broncho around where the pack saddle was concealed. It was quickly fastened on the

pack pony, which was led up by another nervy broncho, which he saddled and made ready to mount by the time John had the black mare ready to ride.

Mounting, they rode off westward at a moderate pace. They were soon beyond the range of vision from the timber, as the land was rolling and Dynamite chose the route. The pack horse was led by Dynamite, who directed John to ride fully a quarter of a mile to his right, thus making a separate trail, as though they were not comrades, nor riding together, nor in any way associated.

John could not see any reason for all these precautions. Nevertheless he rode as directed, silently munching crackers, as he was told to help himself, which he did with a generous hand.

On, on, over rolling sand plains, which looked without landmarks in their weary sameness; sometimes crossing dried-up streams or waterless creek beds. Always apart, yet always going in the same general westward direction.

John was puzzled. What did it all mean? Why give the men, of his own free will, a large sum of money; then run away in the very midst, as it were, of a banquet given in his honor?

He made up his mind to ask Dynamite the first chance he had, as he was curious to learn the reason for an act so unreasonable.

John was so elated and light-hearted he seemed to himself to be floating or flying through the air, away from gloom, dread and despondency. That Sunflower was safe and he himself on his way to California

was joy enough for one day, but to ride the beautiful black and have a bag of Boston crackers was to fill the cup of gladness to overflowing. For the first time since his mother's death he whistled or sung softly to himself, by way of vent to his pent-up happiness.

As evening and darkness came on Dynamite rode over toward John and rode beside him along a stony ledge or bluff. They rode slower, as if to rest the horses, for they had been riding the last three hours at a wearying pace. Dynamite proved to be a good traveling companion, familiar with the whole surrounding country, besides being quick-witted, pleasant and overflowing with dry Yankee humor. They were to ride all night, with but one halt, by a spring, to water the horses and let them eat a few bites of grass. The sky was clear and the night pleasant. The stars and new moon made riding safe and sure, for they were following an old trail during the night-time. For a long time they talked on subjects that were of no especial interest to either, after the order of society jabber-words, sounds and sentences—neutral nothings. John was consuming with curiosity to learn why Dynamite came with him instead of waiting for his late comrades. But Dynamite diverted and evaded for awhile by saying, good-humoredly: "So the Black was a temptation, a terrible temptation?"

"Yes, indeed. I was tempted almost beyond my powers of resistance. But do tell me, were you up a tree? Where were you? How could you hear me?"

"Easy enough. I never lost sight of you after you left the terrace till you went back, after dark, and as

for hearing what you said, that was no great thing for me to do. You yelled loud enough to wake the dead, or be heard up in heaven, or something of that sort. Pity if I, being alive and here in the timber, should not hear as much as the dead. Did you really expect your mother in heaven to hear your shout? Did you expect her to yell down and tell you what to do?"

"I was troubled and tempted to sin; tempted beyond anything I had thought possible. I may have been silly, but I was trying to seek guidance," said John, with meek contrition.

"Now, honest Indian, who did you think it was who answered your call to the dead in heaven?" asked Dynamite, with evident interest.

"I certainly did not think it a disembodied spirit nor a living person, but some sort of spiritual suggestion or sympathetic illusion."

"Now I am sorry," declared Dynamite, laughing, "that I let out the joke, for you could have told your red-headed grandsons of the marvelous voice from the sky, that promised to send you deliverance. Now, of course, the story is spoiled for future use."

"Oh, no; it is better as it is. It shows how easy it is to fool a fool," exclaimed John, in self-disgust. "But I am glad you played the trick on me, as it has given me great mental comfort, if not spiritual support."

"Fiddle!" snorted Dynamite, in mild contempt for all such spiritual weaknesses. "You will some day cut your eyeteeth and come up all right."

"I hope so. I seem in a fair way for passing over the teething period. But do tell me—I am dying to

know why you go now to take me over the plains instead of waiting to go with the others, your old and tried comrades?"

"Take you through?" ejaculated Dynamite, in scornful astonishment. "Why, bless your infantile soul, you are taking me through. I might as well tell you the whole truth, as you will never guess it nor give up trying to find out. Really I can't tell why I am going with you instead of with them. It was an impulse, an inspiration, or call it what you like—instinct, inner consciousness, or sixth sense. It was something that told me to go with you and give them the slip. You heard me offer to give the boys money for a fair race in life. I did that because I felt it my duty as a Lily of Solomon to help my brethren according to my means. I was a bigger fool than Thompson's colt not to wait till I was well out of that neck of timber before I gave them a hint of the treasure of the Castle. I judged them by myself. That won't work on everybody. The greater can measure the less, but the less can never measure or understand the greater. I can tell you one thing. I saw a glitter in Uncle Collis' greedy eye that told my instinct to 'git,' and I 'got.' That is reason enough for me. Why, boy, that glitter told my blundering, body-weighted soul that my hide was spoken for and the tan-vat ready. That light, that flash, that gleam, that glitter in Uncle Collis' eye, meant knife in the back or a bullet in the heart."

"But I am a stranger. Dare you go with me?" said John, in wonder.

"It seems so," replied Dynamite, carelessly. "Yet I must tell you one thing," continued the ex-safe-opener. "That turkey stratagem of yours was a weak, lame, faulty affair. Turkeys don't act that way this time of the year, flopping and falling and tumbling around. I saw your face and knew you at a glance. Further, I knew you had heard more than was safe for you if any one but the Deacon and I knew of your presence."

"Did the Deacon know I was on the terrace?"

"Yes. We were both afraid you would make yourself known and thus get mixed up with our gang in case we were followed. Now, you may wonder why I gave you the best horse, my own Black. I will tell you. She is mine, for I bought her. All the other horses are swipes. You are not to be found on one of them. It would not be conducive to longevity. You shall not suffer for our slips and trips. You notice I gave you a large roll of blankets. In them is a new suit of clothes; also socks and shirts. I may have forgotten some things, but I put in my time. I can tell you that much without lying."

"It is too bad you came off and left all that money in the Castle. The Deacon or Uncle Collis may blow up the whole cliff and find the money."

"Oh, no; I guess not," remarked the Lily of Solomon, with innocent unconcern, as he touched his pony with the spur. They were increasing their speed, as the country was level and the sand and air growing cooler. On, on and on, hour after hour; Dynamite always certain of the way and often turning and

doubling, as if to make their trail blind and hard to follow. Once during the night they halted by a sulphur spring, letting the horses drink and eat grass for a few minutes, while they lunched on boiled ham and crackers.

Again toward morning they stopped awhile, as Dynamite dismounted and examined the road they were traveling. He seemed intent and unusually solicitous. Having completed his examination he remounted, saying cheerily: "All right; all right. There have been teams and horsemen along here recently. Others may come this way to-morrow and cover up our trail."

"Our trail?" repeated John in amazement. "Who on earth could find our tracks, or who would want to find them? I am sure no one could possibly follow us."

"I could," declared Dynamite, coldly, "and so could the Deacon, and not half try. So could that Judas of an Uncle Collis. However, we shall have a good ninety miles start of any of them, for they would not get through raffling till after dark; then they could not follow us till daylight. Anyhow, you are all right on the Black, so long as you carry nothing that looks valuable."

"Are we in danger of pursuit or of robbers?" asked John, not without nervousness.

"No; not exactly that," answered Dynamite, slowly and with moderate certainty. "Not if you have the grit, sand, courage and desire to serve one who is willing and anxious to serve you. I do not ask you to

sacrifice yourself to my interest. All I need is a little artifice and some cool, straightforward, business-like lying. You can call it tact, fibbing, white lies, evasion or sharp business methods, or any other name that quiets your timid, skittish conscience. I have sworn the oath of the Brotherhood, if I get out of this one complication, to leave the old exciting life forever. I am on my way to join my brothers. I used to think an honest life of labor tame and unworthy of a man of spirit; altogether flat, insipid and unbearably dull. But I have changed my mind, or rather my mind has changed me. Somehow things don't look to me just as they used to. I don't know what is the matter with me. The change commenced one rainy night, on hearing a Salvation Army man, standing on the muddy street, dripping wet, pleading and beseeching us mocking devils to turn from evil and evil-doing and become good men. Things began to look funny and queer and have been growing worse ever since—more muddled and mixed up. I am no saint myself. I only wish I were. That is more than I used to care for. Yes, I have left the old life behind, but somehow the old life seems bent on following me. Now I want you to help me escape from it forever."

"I am at your service, heart and soul," answered John, with hearty promptness.

"Very well. I trust you and you may trust me or not; that is for you to decide for yourself. I am now on my way to San Francisco to join my brothers. I have with me more than a million dollars, most of it

in high denomination greenbacks, few less than five hundred dollars; mostly thousands, and also some government bonds that belonged to our highly respectable father, who was an eastern banker. They were bought with deposits—money earned perhaps by depositors; at least earned by others. You know such funds are called brain-money, earned by brain-workers. They work others and pocket the proceeds. Yes, brain-money sounds better than toil-money, or blood-money, or hell-money! True, I have money with me that is tainted with every taint on earth save the one smell of honest sweat of labor; altogether a pile of social carrion. I thought perhaps if I gave the boys some of it the accursed smell of sulphur might go out of the remainder. I warn you, it is a dirty, unclean, putrid, corrupt, unholy mass of godless plunder as ever smeared the hand of an honest man. But we are in for it, because it seems a good thing to have. It is earthly enrichment, like the matter we give back to Mother Earth to coax her to be more bountiful at harvest time; of itself not sweet nor overly fragrant, but something that is needed and has its use.

"Now, boy, of this unsavory load of social fertilizer; you carry behind you, wrapped in your blankets, an old, false-bottomed carpet bag, containing a quarter of a million dollars, for you to deliver at the Palace hotel, San Francisco, to the Arlington brothers. The full instruction is written on the wrappers of each package. The money is all in thousand-dollar greenbacks."

"Indeed you astonish me. Why do you trust me,

a stranger, to carry this money, instead of entrusting it to some of your own comrades, the Lilies of Solomon?"

"Boy, you make me laugh; you are so funny. Why doesn't the mamma mouse go to the cat and ask her to come in and tend the baby mice? Why doesn't the hen turkey ask the coyote to come and hover the young turks while she goes off flirting with the strutting, spreading gobblers?

"I can tell you, boy. Instinct, intuition, hold their own, neck to neck, with reason. Instinct tells me to trust you and it does not tell me to trust them to any alarming extent."

"It is a great trust you have given me," said John, almost sadly. "Nevertheless I will do my best. You are leading me out of the wilderness and if I can help you out of that other kind of barren, hopeless desert I am at your service and give you my hand without question or thought of reward."

"Bully for you, my chick of a cherub! I thought you would wince and frisk and champ the bit a little before you consented to go alone like a sensible carrier."

"I accept your trust. I shall act as your messenger. I will deliver the contents of the false bottom of that carpet bag if it is a human possibility. You do well to trust a Martindale. They are forever faithful, even unto death."

"I wish I might say the same of the foxy, high-toned Arlingtons, who are truly and fairly represented

in Dynamite, the safe-opener," said the other, bitterly.

The darkness melted into light, the sun rose and the forenoon had almost gone when they arrived at a clump of timber where there was a spring of fresh water. They picketed and unsaddled the horses for a few hours' rest. The grass was fine and the shade cool and delightful. They ate a cold lunch, as Dynamite was too cautions and prudent to build a fire, for the smoke to reveal the whereabouts of men. In all their long ride they had not passed a single habitation of man; neither had they seen one person. Still, Dynamite was alert and watchful. He wanted to avoid and escape from the eyes of men, for he had reason to be doubly crafty and strategic.

He told John after lunch to go on over the bluff and there picket the Black, taking the saddle and large roll of blankets containing the $250,000. He unrolled the blankets, looked at the suit of clothes and the old, ragged, frayed carpet bag, without lock, fastened by two common clasps; but the money was not visible; neither did he make any effort to see or find its place of concealment. It was there and that was enough for him to know.

He wrapped himself in the blankets, putting the old carpet bag under his left arm, and was soon sleeping soundly.

About five o'clock he was awakened by Dynamite, who was shaking him gently, telling him it was time to be riding. The horses were saddled and ready to start. John jumped to his feet and looked around in

nervous confusion. He had slept so soundly that it took him some time to recall his surroundings.

They rode on all through the night at a more moderate pace, stopping but once to rest the tired animals. They did not reach water till long after noon. The horses were suffering for water and rest. But the water was not the coolest nor sweetest; yet it was welcome to both men and horses. As there were timber, shade and grass, they would give the horses and themselves a longer rest. Again they ate a cold lunch and were getting ready to separate for the night, as Dynamite seemed determined not to have John found in his company. If anything happened he wanted John to be counted out. He took the old carpet bag, opened the false bottom and showed John the bills, explaining the fastenings, springs and screw-heads, as well as the whole false lining. John found himself deeply interested in the deceitful old carpet bag and in the whole game of evasion and deception. He felt himself a carrier, a messenger, a courier, hurrying through a wild and dangerous country. This appealed to his poetic, romantic nature and excited his imaginative enthusiasm. The contents of the pack saddle were much to his liking. Clean socks and shirts he could appreciate. They spoke to his dainty, æsthetic nature, but cash money, the common, vulgar substitute for barter, the medium of exchange, was nothing more to him than savage shells and wampum. That men should sacrifice the quiet comforts of life, liberty and honor for the possession of such trash was to him an unknown, unfelt tempta-

tion. While clean socks and clean shirts might be tempting, yet money as money was not. To him money was a convenience in trade, a quick method of barter, worthless in and of itself. A canteen of water on the desert was of more value to a thirsty man than any amount of red gold or green printed paper. John's education had been faulty. He had never been taught to venerate money or sell his soul for it. But clean, whole garments spoke a language that his soul understood.

He was somewhat slow in leading the Black off by herself. Perhaps Dynamite saw something wistful in his eye, for he said, almost tenderly: "What is it, cherub?"

"How could you, having so much ready money, find heart to rob a poor country storekeeper of his goods and safe, as well as poor, hard-working homesteaders of their stock horses?"

"That's a square question, put right to the point," answered Dynamite, without confusion. "Looking at it in that light the whole job was a mean, shabby, dirty piece of work, even if we didn't get much for our trouble. The horses were wild, unbroken bronchos when we lassoed them, but the Deacon broke them in no time.

"Would it make you think better of me if I should tell you that store job was mostly Uncle Collis' work? He would steal if he had money to burn. It was born in him. I was flush, for I had come down here alone and taken a few hundred back with me. We were all having a good time. The Deacon and I were camp-

ing together and the three others were staying about town. They wanted a little excitement. It is like love or war, something to stir the blood and make one forget how mean he really is. I tell you this not to excuse myself, as I knew nothing of the affair till one night Uncle Collis, Uncle Sam and the Shepherd came yelling and dashing up to our tent with that wagon loaded with goods, safe and any other kind of plunder. If you will believe me, there was a plow and a hog yoke in the lot. They came to us to help them hide the boodle. I said: 'No; we can't hide it here. But come with me, boys, down to the Castle. There you can hide a shipload of plunder.' You see, the old train-robbing excitement was on me in a minute, like a horse that has once run on the fire engine. I was up and on the run at the word 'Go.'

"The Deacon saddled our lot of horses and we were on the way to the Castle in three minutes. I had owned the Black for some weeks. Now I have told you my part in the affair. The Deacon is a good fellow, a rich man's son, who joined our Brotherhood because it suited his wild, roving, liberty-loving, restless fancy. He had some little scrap back east. I think he killed an aristocrat who wronged a pretty waiter girl by drugging her ice cream and leading her off to a place where she was detained for weeks. The fool boasted of his part in the affair and the Deacon struck him in the neck, dead. Rather than stand a trial he lit out and we left him at the Castle.

"He will reach the coast before we do; that is, if

Uncle Collis does not take a hankering for his twenty thousand dollars."

"Uncle Collis is greedy beyond the greed of common men," asserted John, with mild severity.

"Maybe; perhaps so," agreed Dynamite, without passion or much condemnation. "He inherited the greedy, begging mania. His father was an ambitious preacher, building a fine church in a poor community, begging and scheming and coveting more, more, more, while the summer he was born his mother was running four or five money-swiping societies, always begging and crying: 'Give, give, give.'

"When Uncle Collis was born he was just a little, quivering, red, skinny bundle of greed. He began when he was an hour old, trying to suck every one he came near, turning his little, greedy mouth from side to side, smacking his lips and sticking out his little doubled-up tongue, ready to catch hold. Before he was ten months old he sucked the life out of his mother. When he was a toddler his father had to watch him or he would have filled the house with his infantile plunder. At seven he would steal hitching posts, gates, and bricks off the neighbors' chimneys. At ten he was a burglar; at fifteen a highwayman. He told me this himself. You can believe it or not. I have only his word for it. You ought to hear him tell how he used to suck when he was a baby; just stuff himself almost to bursting; then vomit it up and go at the same thing over again and again!"

"That is a hard story," said John, gloomily.

CHAPTER XI.

Ten days they had hastened on westward. The horses were growing thin and the riders looked weary, if not gaunt and haggard. The evening of the tenth day they reached a clump of pines, willows and cottonwood, growing along a small stream of warm, impure water. John tasted the water and shook his head in disgust. At this Dynamite laughed and told him to take his canteen and go down stream, below the big rock, and see if there were any signs of springs among the rocks. John went as directed. He shouted to Dynamite to come down and drink, as the water there was cool and free from bad taste of minerals of any kind. But Dynamite had other cares besides running off to look at a spring that he had often visited.

John filled the canteen and brought it to him. He drank hastily, saying to John in a constrained voice: "Seraph, I have made a discovery. We are followed by some one camping on our trail."

John could not believe it possible. He thought of his own treacherous imagination and tried to convince Dynamite that he was deceiving himself by taking shadows for realities, as he himself was prone to do. Moreover, John declared it was impossible for any one to follow them hundreds of miles through sands,

across plains, deserts and the uninhabited wilderness. Dynamite's answer was handing him a fine field glass, telling him to ascend the highest hill, climb a certain pine tree and look back over their trail carefully as far as the point of timber where he wanted to stop for the night. John was lithe and, greatly excited, soon he was up among the topmost branches of the pine, looking back eastward.

Dynamite stood silently beneath the tree waiting to hear what John might report. At length he shouted down: "Yes, sir; there are two men at the point; they will camp there. One man is working around the camp. The other is out examining the road, as if looking for our trail. He is walking around, much stooped over. There, he raised up. He looks for all the world just like Uncle Collis! The one cooking and fixing the fire is indeed like Uncle Sam. I can see the horses. They are grazing. They are not those from the Castle," added John slowly.

"No," responded Dynamite, calmly. "They must have changed often to overtake us so soon. Come down, Cherub. I have work for to-night; but we will eat as usual. This is a good camping ground—water, wood and grass. They think I have not discovered them, but I saw them yesterday. I did not like to worry you. I have been trying to give them the slip. I failed. Now, pile on the brush and make a huge smoke, so they will think we are off guard. Skin the grouse and cook them all. I shot so many to-day I thought you would mistrust something was up. I shot to make them think I was not fearing pursuit."

Dynamite was active, alert and full of resources and strategems. All through the journey he had been cook, packer, guide and sentinel. He seemed to sleep little; yet never complained of fatigue. Such energy, accuracy, vigilance and punctuality were worthy of a better cause. Even confiding, gullible John Martindale grew cautious, if not suspicious, under his instruction. But to-night was a crisis, a time to test the latent powers of the future statesman. What had been a vague possibility was now an absolute certainty. Uncle Collis meant business. No million dollars went unguarded, roving around the desert, without giving him toll; not if he knew it. He was doubtless prepared for each and every emergency. There were plenty of arms and ammunition stored up in the Castle. He could choose the best. The night would not pass without a visit from him and his companion.

Dynamite was not slow to act in any critical situation. His mind was swift and its conclusion reliable. He would slip off alone as soon as darkness would cover his flight, ride to Flagstaff and take the cars for San Francisco. While John was caring for the horses and cooking supper Dynamite was making his hasty preparations. He opened the pack saddle, taking out a grip and pair of well-filled saddle bags. He changed his clothes, putting on a new suit and a soft felt hat.

John was to stay in camp a day or so and tell those business-like fibs in case Uncle Collis called. Dynamite gave John minute directions what to do and what not to do. He cautioned him repeatedly not to

look at his old carpet bag nervously, nor show the least care or solicitude if any one touched it or even opened it to look at his shirts and toilet articles. He explained to John the whole situation. He told him he should carry the $750,000 away with him, leaving John to carry the $250,000 when he had sent Uncle Collis off on the wrong trail.

John was directed to build a large brush and log fire, as if to drive off the mosquitoes, which were numerous and troublesome; then make a dummy from out the cast-off clothing of Dynamite and place its head on his saddle, with his hat over the dummy's face, placing the apparently sleeping figure not very far from the fire; near enough for the fire to show where it was lying. This figure John was to nurse, as if Dynamite was sick in camp for a day or two; then take the Black and the pack pony and go on westward alone.

John was willing to do anything to serve one who had aided him in his peril and adverse fortune. On one point Dynamite was earnest and emphatic in his commands. John was to find some secret place of concealment for himself to sleep, far from the fire and the firelight. John was not to be found in the night by possible assassins.

After Dynamite's broncho was saddled and ready for an all-night run he handed John a pocketbook, a gold watch and a compass, also giving him the Black and the pack horse and contents of the pack and pack saddle, saying carelessly they were no use to him, as he would reach the cars next forenoon if the broncho

stood up under the pressure. John noticed he left the best saddle for him to ride, taking himself the one John had been riding. Again he told John what to say and do in case Uncle Collis came in the daytime into camp.

John promised to hold his own with any Uncle Collis if the thing could be done by a few evasive half-truths. Dynamite told John he was going down toward Mexico on business, to be away a day or two. John was waiting his return. The dummy was his company, to cheat his lonesomeness. This story he was simply to repeat to Uncle Collis if he visited the camp openly.

Near the camp was a trail going south, as well as one going toward the west. Each was traveled more or less frequently. When it grew dark Dynamite mounted and rode south, while John saw him disappear in the dim darkness. Soon he returned, backing his broncho slowly. When he came near John he said quickly, as if fearing John would refuse the gift: "In that pocketbook is a card. When you get to the Palace hotel give that to the hotel clerk. There is also in that pocketbook two five hundred-dollar bills to help you hunt up your brother. They are yours—a little present from me. You better rip open the right watch pocket of your vest and slip the bills down in your vest lining. They are wrapped in oil-silk and there is a safety pin on the silk for you to pin it blindly into the interlining. Good-bye till we meet again."

With a bound the pony fled westward into the darkness.

John flew around to complete the dummy, which Dynamite had partly made, as if to give John an idea of what was needed. The dummy appealed to his artistic nature. He shaped the head and neck out of the sack of flour, tying a red silk handkerchief around the neck, like a cowboy, just as Dynamite had worn it riding over the waste of sands. The body was made from the contents of the pack, around which he buttoned the coat and vest. The socks and cast-off trousers, stuffed with grass, completed the anatomy, which, wrapped in a blanket, with hat over the face, would have deceived the naked eye, much more a field glass.

John was delighted with his success. Moreover, he felt a sort of companionship in its presence. He would walk up to it often, as if to feel its pulse or give it a cup of water. He entered into the spirit of the deceit with enthusiasm, if not with wickedness.

Soon the night grew dark and dismal. To John's excited imagination the darkness seemed filled with lurking forms of evil. He shrank back and away from the light of the great, blazing brush heap. He went out to the horses and moved them farther apart and lower down the stream. He was possessed and oppressed by a haunting sense of personal danger. Moreover, his fertile fancy peopled the darkness with hundreds of crouching Uncle Collises and leering, sneaking Uncle Sams.

The coyotes had an aggressive, ominous howl,

while owls and nighthawks added notes of ill-omened torment. Meantime the mosquitoes were not idle nor few in number.

Nothing seemed friendly or reassuring. Nevertheless John had put his hand to the plow and he was going on even to the end. He forced his trembling hands to gather up branches and bits of logs and bark and carry them onto the fire. He picked up everything that would burn and kept the great fire a-blazing. He even went up to the dummy as though talking with the sick man. Carelessly turning he picked up his roll of blankets and tossed them off into the darker shadows. He then sauntered off leisurely into the shadows. Catching up the blankets containing the old carpet bag he hurried off into the darkness and the dense willows and pines. Sleep was impossible. Phantoms, shades and forms of horror seemed to hover and swoop down and around him. In the dark, dense thicket he came to a low-leaning willow of large size. He drew himself up on the tree, crawling slowly along up its sloping body till he reached the many large, spreading branches. He found a good seat among the many limbs and overhanging foliage. With his bundle across his knees he leaned back against the forked branches to rest or conjure up forms of hideous mockery. At times he may have become drowsy or even fallen asleep; still, the consciousness of danger never left him for an instant.

From his high perch he could look over, down by the fire and see the gray outlines of the dummy. At

length the fire ceased to blaze. The coals and embers emitted a dim, faint glow. The dummy was partially visible. John saw, or fancied he saw, a gliding, crouching, stealthy figure of human shape slowly approaching the dummy. It leaned over the seeming sleeper. A breeze fanned the fire and a flame shot up for an instant and lighted the crouching visitant. It seemed twice to raise its arm and strike downward. There was a gleam, a flash of bright steel; but the glance was fleeting, for the flame went down in darkness and he saw no more.

John, like many imaginative persons, had learned to distrust the things seen dimly and finished out by a vivid imagination. He told himself it was another phantom of his overwrought brain—unreal as a poet's dream of life. He called himself a fool, an arch coward and was tempted to whistle from sheer self-hatred. But the dry leaves rustled and the twigs crackled near him, as when a person is walking slowly in the night. A bird flew frightened from its perch and went whizzing by him as he sat listening; soon more crackling and snapping of twigs and a low, cautious whistle, or bird-like call. He was sure he saw two forms of darkness pass under the leaning willow. Still it might have been the wind that moved the leaves and gave out the crackling sound, or it might have been some hungry coyotes, prowling about, lured by the scent of cooking grouse or the burnt feathers and scraps.

Whatever caused the sound it passed on and away. The wind moaned and sighed through the foliage, but the dry leaves and twigs gave out no sound. He

again reproached his treacherous fancy and leaned his head over on his bundle and tried vainly to drop to sleep. All night John remained in the treetop, wakeful and fighting mosquitoes. At daylight he came down. Everything was as he had left it. He went up as if to converse with the dummy. He leaned down and looked. It had not been disturbed. He watered the horses and picketed them in fresh grass and ate some cold fragments left from the night before, being fully, wholly convinced that no one had visited the camp during the night. As he was to remain all day and another sleepless night, he concluded to sleep when it was daylight. He wrapped himself in his blankets. with the old carpet bag under his left arm and his saddle for a pillow. He lay down beside the dummy and slept till afternoon.

He awoke, being roused by prancing and neighing of strange horses and loud, harsh voices calling: "Hello, there, lazybones; sleeping this time o' day? Get up and welcome your visitors."

John jumped to his feet, letting the blankets drop down over the old carpet bag and saddle. He spoke kindly to Uncle Collis and Uncle Sam, but said no word of welcome. They had dismounted and stood near, with the bridle reins over their arms, taking in the camp and everything with roving, eager eyes.

They spoke cheerfully and seemed surprised to meet John, whom they declared was an old comrade of cattle car memory. Uncle Collis was super-sweet and talkative. John, not to be outdone by any tramp in civility, told them he did not recognize these gentle-

men as former tramps, met casually and long since forgotten.

John tried to talk of the weather, the country, the mosquitoes, hoping to avoid questions and gain time to think out his line of business-like fairy tales, which he had promised to exploit.

But Uncle Collis was not to be put off or evaded. He asked, pointedly, "Who is that lying sleeping like a log?" approaching the dummy, touching it with a kick of his toe, saying: "Get up, you lazy hound, and sling on the grub fixings for your friendly visitors. Oh, thunder! It is a blasted dummy. What did you make that thing for?"

"Oh, for fun; for company to cheat my lonesomeness," answered John, glibly. "A friend overtook me and we traveled on together. He has gone off down toward Mexico. I wanted to go, but he did not want me along. I suppose I must have cut up and acted like a baby, for he told me to make me a companion, just as girls make dolls to have something to amuse them and make-believe company. So I made up this fellow out of the fellow's cast-off clothing. It is lots better than being alone. It is lots of fun thinking how he will stare when he sees that fellow lying in his blankets."

John was doing well for a beginner; so easy is lying.

"When's he coming back?" asked Uncle Collis, with cunningly concealed interest.

"Oh, he said to-morrow morning, but I am afraid he means to give me the slip, for he said if he failed to

return to-morrow I was to take everything and start on alone."

"Thunder! You don't say so," snorted Uncle Collis, with ill-concealed irritation. "Now, I know that fellow. I have a little unfinished business with him. I want to see him bad. We must try and overtake him."

"When did he start?" questioned Uncle Sam, with suppressed excitement.

"Oh, it was dark as fury; that much I know," said John, with well-assumed stupidity.

"Well, you are a queer bird, I vow. I don't blame him for going off alone. I don't wonder he wanted to get rid of your company. I guess we better follow suit. What do you say, Uncle Sam?"

"I say let's have something to eat. I'm hungry as a wolf; no time to fill a pack saddle with goodies. Where's your gun, boy? Guess I'll go out and kill some quail."

"Ah! So Dynamite took the guns?" sniffed Uncle Sam, with evident annoyance. "Rather selfish of him. He should have left you a gun to defend yourself."

"But I don't know how to use a gun and he said there were no bears around here anyhow."

"Well, what did he give you?" queried the other sneeringly.

"Oh, just lots and lots of things. In case he did not come back in the morning I am to have and to own the two horses, saddles, packs, blankets, provisions, watch, clothes and pocketbook containing six

silver dollars and a ten-dollar gold piece. I tell you that is something for a stranger to give a poor tramp like me."

"Yes, fair to middling," replied Uncle Collis, without interest in the subject. He was thinking of larger game, for he asked, with cutting directness:

"Did Dynamite take any pack or bundles with him; anything bulky but the guns?"

"Yes, indeed, he did; just all the pony wanted to carry—big grip and saddlebags crammed full."

Meantime Uncle Sam had started a fire and put over the coffee boiler from John's pack. Then he came up to John and asked where he kept his flour and baking powder.

John went up to the dummy's head and took hold of the sack with a jerk of irritation, raising it up with a twitch, the flour shooting out from two new cuts. John nearly fainted. He dropped the sack with a sob-like shriek: "Oh, my God!" and staggered back, white and shivering.

"What's the matter now?" asked Uncle Collis gruffly. "Found a rattler or a horned toad?"

"Oh, my flour sack is cut and the flour all spilling out," answered John, choking with suppressed emotion.

"Well, well, do have a little self-control. That's nothing. Holes will wear in everything in a pack saddle. Here, I will tie them up and save your flour."

He tied up the holes and shook off the wasted flour, while Uncle Sam helped himself to coffee, bacon and sugar with a free and easy hand. Meanwhile John

stood around white and silent. He was thinking of Dynamite's escape and the bright, flashing blade of the thwarted assassin. He lifted up the blankets as if to shake off the flour. There were fresh cuts in them, as though made by a sharp, two-edged knife.

While the two men were eating and drinking they conversed in an undertone. They were anxious and watchful. They ate ravenously, as though they had fasted long or fared poorly.

John walked off into the willows to take a second look at the ground where the dark figures of the night met, beneath the willow. There were tracks of large shoes in the earth around the roots of a tree. John was satisfied and altogether certain. To his mind the two ungrateful sinners ceased to be men and brothers. They were monsters. They were embodied spirits of evil. Then he thought of Uncle Collis as a greedy infant, rolling his little head and seeking some one to suck; marked with covetousness even before birth. Then John relented and felt pity where he had felt fury and human passion. He walked back to the men, not cordially, but with more tolerance and compassion.

Hanging by a strap over his shoulder Uncle Collis had his field glass, ready for use. He was taking it from the case as John drew near. He held a large pancake in one hand, folded over some bacon, eating and looking through the glass at the same time. Suddenly he started and ran up on the highest mount, with glass in one hand and meat and pancake in the other. When he reached the summit of the high

bluff John expected to see him look off southward. Instead of that he was looking eastward, over and along his own trail.

All at once he gave a short, sharp shout. Uncle Sam seemed to understand, for he grabbed up John's coffee, sugar and baking powder and thrust them into his own saddlebags, pouring what flour he could into the other end of his bags; then, throwing the bags on behind his horse, was ready to ride, without heeding John's frowns and feeble words of remonstrance.

Uncle Collis came rushing down, threw the fine saddle left by Dynamite for John on the back of the pack pony, leaving in its place a vicious, wild-eyed, ordinary, untamed broncho.

John protested, supplicated and entreated, but in vain. Uncle Collis was desperate, if not reckless. He reminded John that there were times when might was right and the present occasion was one of those times. He was inexorable. Furthermore, he said the pony had been joint property at the Castle and if John did not shut up mighty quick he would take the Black also.

At this threat John discreetly held his peace, walking back into the timber, raging with human bitterness. He saw them gallop off southward, as he supposed to overtake Dynamite. They left him the beautiful Black. This was one grain of comfort.

John yielded to the unavoidable with some grace. He was thankful that he had sense enough to obey the many instructions of Dynamite. He felt of his vest, where he had secretly pinned the oilsilk con-

taining the thousand dollars. Then he took out his gold watch and wound it, opening it and looking at the jeweled works. It was his first watch, just as the Black was his first horse. The watch seemed to quiet his agitated spirits. Nevertheless, when his eyes rested on that pawing, snorting, vicious-eyed broncho his anger returned.

To divert his mind from that ugly animal he thought over how well he had followed the orders of Dynamite. Even the telling of mild half-truths gave him pleasure instead of pain. He thought if it were to do over again he could work in a few more fibs with relish. So quick does the conscience cease to reprove the exploiter of "business methods."

That John had not fastened his eyes on the old carpet bag was also a source of self-approval. Neither had he showed signs of concern when Uncle Collis opened it and took an inventory of its contents. From these pleasing thoughts his mind, as well as his eyes, would go back to the wild-eyed, untamed snorter. John was certain it would not let him put the pack on its back, even if he had the nerve to make the attempt. He walked toward the pawing, prancing, kicking demon with a grain sack, to see if it would let him place it on its back. It threw up its head with a loud snort, puffing, blowing, rearing and plunging, until John was afraid to go near it, even to lead it to water. John was no horseman or broncho-breaker. He was tempted, strongly and strangely moved to cut the rope and turn the ugly brute loose, to care for itself or follow Uncle Collis, at its own

Satanic will. The thought, the impulse was an inspiration, an intuitive, psychic suggestion. John hesitated, much to his regret.

Inasmuch as he was angry, he failed to act wisely. He looked over and sorted out his remaining possessions, laying aside such as he could carry with him on the Black, without overloading his riding horse. John was light weight when compared with Dynamite or Uncle Collis. This difference, John thought, could be made up by the things from the pack saddle. Besides, he must make more reasonable effort to reconcile and overcome the ferocious broncho before cutting the rope.

The animal was intelligent. It knew John was timid, if not frightened. Then, acting from this knowledge, it continued to make itself appear wild, wicked and untamable. John was repulsed, discouraged and defeated. The broncho celebrated its victory by laying back its ears, plunging at John with open mouth, as if to tear him with its malicious teeth. John retreated hastily, while the broncho continued its derisive kicks, snorts, jumps, vaults and leers. John took out his old, dull knife and rubbed it across a stone to bring it up to the required edge for the cutting of the rope. He walked toward the brute. Again he hesitated. He heard a rushing noise through the timber. He listened, hearkened and, alas, waited, hesitated, deferred.

Several strange, angry-looking horsemen came riding in and around the timber, closing in about the camp. They were fearless riders—reins in one hand

and guns in the other—their whole aspect threatening, insolent and hostile. They looked at John with hate and menace in their eyes. The one who seemed to be the leader shouted to John to hold up his hands. He obeyed with silent promptness. The leader yelled out: "Surrender! We have got you this time, sure; arrested red-handed, as it were."

"Gentlemen, what is the matter? What do you want? Where is your warrant?" asked John, with a boldness which astonished himself.

"We will let you know all those little formalities in about three minutes, as soon as we can trot you off to a good tree and get this rope over a limb," sneered the leader in cutting brevity.

"Gentlemen, you are laboring under some strange mistake. I have harmed no one. I am guilty of nothing more atrocious than poverty and writing poetry," said John, with the convincing audacity of innocence.

"Didn't you, yesterday, steal that sorrel broncho tethered out there, leaving a dead crowbait for us to bury right by the corral?"

"No, sir; I did not. I am not equal to stealing or riding that snorting demon. See, I hold in my hand my old knife, just sharpened to cut the lariat and let him loose."

"How came he here, by your camp, securely tethered?" thundered the leader in biting irony. "I suppose he walked over here to make a morning call, with tethering pin in his teeth, and drove it down into the ground with his hind hoof!"

"Oh, no; two fellows came here just a little while ago and took my gentle pack horse, in defiance of justice and honor, and left that sorrel snorter in its stead. I protested and demanded, but they said might was right in their case. They were armed and not good men. Come; look for yourselves. There is my pack and pack saddle. See if any of you real horsemen can put that on his back."

"But you might have made a pack horse of the black thoroughbred," suggested a long-legged son of the desert. "She is gentle enough for anything."

"However, I did not; you can see for yourself. You can follow footmarks. Now read the saddle marks on those horses' backs and learn that I speak the truth."

"Correct, stranger. You can take down your paws if you are through sticking them up for birds to roost on," remarked the leader, with a grin meant to be friendly.

They all went out and around the sorrel broncho and the black, all looking, talking and carefully examining the saddle marks.

"I tell you, boy, that was a close call, a close shave," exclaimed the leader, almost admiringly. "Glad you were so thoughtful as to call our attention to these little points. We might have found it out some time. Then it is so disagreeable, after a fellow is dead, to find out we have hung the wrong man. Such a fool job; makes a fellow feel flat for a whole week! Glad you had wit enough to set us right!"

In the meantime some of the others were bringing brush, sticks, barks and chunks of wood, building a

great fire, while others were tossing and clawing over John's stock of provisions, preparing themselves food without waiting for the formality of an invitation.

John thought things were growing rather informal, even for the "wild and woolly west." The sorrel broncho they were more than welcome to take, but the bacon and remaining flour was quite another thing. He was trying to control his nerves enough to ask them to leave him something for future use when he was startled by hearing one of the tobacco-chewing Bedouins shout in wild excitement:

"By the great horn spoon! That black is my Nig, stole more than six months ago! I can prove it by herself. She is mine, by Jupiter! I trained her. She is a trick horse. I'll show you how she can bow, dance, kneel, salute partners, nod her head for yes and shake her head for no."

He made her go through the whole programme without a break.

"No doubt but she has been trained by you," said John sadly, as though the words were wrung from his bleeding heart. "Still, you might have sold her," added the novitiate, hopefully.

"Not much, Mary Ann!" retorted the Bedouin in infinite disgust. "We don't sell that kind of horses!"

Then they all gathered up around the beautiful black, each one making some pungent remark, as their faces grew dark and their voices lower. John was not thinking of himself. He was mourning the loss of the beautiful black; nor did he blame the owner for wanting his own horse, that he had trained

so wonderfully. Nevertheless, John was young and the black was his first horse. It seemed heart-rending to give her up without a protest. He at length observed that the men were whispering and looking at him with unfriendly if not with ferocious eyes. Still, he did not understand the full meaning of this new complication. He thought it was bad enough to take away both horses, without more trouble; so little did he understand his countrymen and their brutal, summary methods.

The leader approached John slowly, with cool, solemn air, saying gloomily: "Well, young man, it looks as though you'd have to swing on general principles. Two stolen horses found in your possession; that's bad for your case. We are for law and order, if we have to string up half the light-fingered gentry in the country. It's our duty to stop these things. We've a patent process; sure cure; no relapse or return of the disease. We give you just three minutes to square up your accounts and turn over your vouchers."

They all formed a hollow square around white-faced, quivering John Martindale. They looked at him sternly with savage eyes that told of ropes, nooses and dangling dead men. Not one face showed a line or glance of mercy or a thrill or throb of Christian brotherhood. To them the possession of a horse was more sacred than the life and liberty of any brother man! Such is the savagery of might.

John, innocent and without guile, understood the full meaning of the words spoken by the leader. Instinct rose in his defense, for his reason was appalled.

With a face white and colorless as the dead, he said, in a voice that sounded strange and husky to himself: "Gentlemen, will you allow me time to make a few statements of facts that may make my case look less criminal and desperate?"

Some bowed assent. Others shouted: "Go ahead!" "Fire away!" "Let 'er flicker!"

John talked fast and fluently, for he knew his life depended on his words. This roused his latent powers. He was more astonished at his own quickness, pathos and eloquence than were his hearers. He had always been a ready debater, having the rare gift of thinking on his feet. He ended by telling them the impossibility of his stealing the black six months ago, as he was then studying in Ann Arbor. He showed them the open letter to Lawyer Rush, his graduating papers and his name, John Martindale, tattooed on his arm. They glanced at the papers and at the dates. Then they looked at each other; then at John, whose face and words had convinced them more than his papers or tattooed name. For John had the face, the eye and the expression of not only a good young man, but of one that was absolutely innocent of all evil intentions.

When he was through talking some said gayly: "You are all right!" "You'll pass!" "You're a peach!" "Bully for you!" "Good boy!" "Good boy!"

Then John knew they would not lynch him—hang him then and there. But to be even arrested

and confined in jail, to await a slow, tardy trial, was a thought almost as terrible.

Notwithstanding they gave up the duty and pleasure of hanging a supposed horse-thief, they did not give up the idea of taking their own property; besides, law was on their side. They would have the horses anyhow. That much was already settled. They grew reasonable and almost friendly, while one ill-dressed son of the desert swore he would as soon tear a sucking baby from his mother's breast and hang it as to hang a girl-faced thing like the accused.

Moreover, the leader grew open to negotiation, if not compromise. He told John in a fatherly roundabout way that he could give up the horses and other such property as he did not need and could not carry as he walked on over the desert, or he could come back with them, go to jail, stand trial and prove property. He dwelt on the dreary, damp jail, the bias of the jury, the rigor of the inexorable judge and the long, hopeless years in the God-forsaken penitentiary, adding as a clincher that to be arrested for horse-stealing was to be convicted and sentenced to the utmost limit of the law.

They all now joined in exhorting John to give up everything possible and call the thing square and settled. John had little chance to refuse or reject any terms they were pleased to make. He really had no choice in the matter. They named the conditions. He accepted the one that left him free to continue his journey.

He handed the elegant gold watch and chain to the

leader, telling him that all he wanted was his satchel, blankets and some food.

The outlook was not pleasant; many hundred miles before him, without guide, horse or provisions. But, inasmuch as they would take the horses anyhow, he might as well save his life and liberty.

With the bitterness of youthful misery he saw the triumphant sons of the plains gather up his precious belongings. The social formalities of the desert are elastic. They overhauled his pack. They opened his satchel, took out the combs, toothbrush, manicure set, hand-mirror and tried them with free hands. They shook out the shirts and socks and new suit of clothing, discussing their relative cost and value. They divided the pack, saddles, bridles and suit of clothes, but the watch and chain was to be raffled off, each one having a chance.

To John it was like dying and looking back to earth, seeing your friends and relatives quarreling and dividing the property. He was filled with disgust and loathing. John remained silent. He was seething with youthful, impotent rage. With speechless agony he saw them saddle the beautiful Black. He turned his face away and walked off among the dense trees, but they called out to him not to be sulky, but to thank his lucky stars that he was alive and kicking and not hanging from a willow limb, dancing for the buzzards. They rode gayly away like men who have done mankind a noble service.

When they were well out of sight and hearing John went back to see if they had left the things he men-

tioned. They had scorned to take the old frayed and faded carpet bag. They had left the dishonored toilet articles, one canteen and the poorer pair of blankets.

The compass was in his pocket, with the pocket-book, but the socks and the new shirts were all gone. Nothing remained but the soiled long drawn-out shirtwaist, which the dear King's Daughters made and named a man's shirt. This impossible garment the sons of the desert had no use for. Therefore they generously left it for John; but not one mouthful of food, not so much as a bacon rind or a cold pancake. He questioned himself; had they purposely left him to starve in the desert? At least they had not done by him as they would be done by. Inasmuch as John felt woefully used, he said over the Lord's Prayer with heartiness and with understanding of its broad fraternal meaning. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Then and there he forgave them and his soul was at peace. Still he mourned the loss of the beautiful Black as a mother mourns the death of her new-born babe, in unspeakable sorrow.

He sat down, hungry and disheartened. He thought of his worn-out shoes, his want of provisions, of his elation of a few short hours ago, and his heart sunk down in blackness. But the sight of the old satchel lying despised at his feet turned the current of his thoughts. Instead of counting his losses he found himself thanking God for what remained. This comforted him exceedingly. Besides, the smaller his pack the less his burden. He was used to action and

quick to decide. He rolled the satchel in his blankets, filled his canteen, looked at his compass and started out boldly into the desert, for California. He knew he must reach the railway track while he had strength to travel. Furthermore he had no desire for another visit from Uncle Collis and Uncle Sam.

Dynamite had told him the distance and direction, little thinking how useful it would become to John himself. He walked on with a long, swinging stride, for he had accepted the inevitable and was at peace with himself and all mankind. He would reach the railway track, follow it to the first station, then buy a ticket to Barstow. As he walked briskly on he pondered sagely on the uncertainty of earthly affairs. To-day high; to-morrow low; to-day rich and insolent; to-morrow poor and abject; to-day feasting and hopeful; to-morrow hungry and despondent. He concluded that he, for one, would thank God and bow meekly to whatever might be his lot on earth for the few days man is permitted to live. Although hungry John was growing light-hearted. So much does the mind dominate over matter.

He often consulted his compass and followed the course given him by Dynamite. When darkness came and made walking too uncertain he rested till the moon came up. Then he hurried onward with the speed of hope or desperation. When morning came, having nothing to eat, he was not delayed, but drank a few swallows of water and was grateful that he had even water. He was delighted at his powers of endurance. Mile after mile he walked onward

without sitting down to rest. However, he often glanced backward, fearing Uncle Collis might think it worth his while to hunt him up and wreak some direful vengeance on his offending head. But no Uncle Collis came.

The wild dreariness of the surrounding desolation promised no companions. The dwarfed and stunted trees and shrubs told the legend of change, upheaval, submergence and world-wide overthrow; the sea bottom dry land, and the olden dry land the bed of the readjusted oceans.

About noon John reached the track and toward evening he came to a lonely station. He was hungry, weary and suffering from a terrible nervous headache. The excitement and unusual emotions of the day before were partly responsible for the maddening pain in his head. Furthermore, his canteen was empty and his thirst gave him great annoyance. He asked for water and was given a cup of bitter, insipid fluid.

He bought a ticket for Barstow and used all his available money save twenty cents. He bought a sandwich, which was neither large nor fresh, paying ten cents for the poor little thing. He devoured it with relish and was strongly tempted to invest the remaining ten cents in another venerable biscuit. Prudence forbade. Yet, as a compromise, he asked for another drink of water. He was told, confidentially, not to irrigate too freely with that kind of fluid, as it was risky—hard on the delicate inside works.

The train came, nor had he been waiting so long as he expected to wait. He entered the car, a ticket-holder and not as a trembling tramp. That he was hungry and weary did not make him utterly miserable. The motion and change of scene diverted his thoughts He even thought how much faster the cars were carrying him than was possible to travel on horseback. Thenceforward the beautiful Black was a memory more than a bitter regret.

Sometimes he leaned back on his seat and slept. At least his headache was less maddening and he was less fatigued. The car was not crowded and he kept his bundle by his feet. No one noticed him or addressed him in any way. The conductor came and silently, with some show of official greatness or condescension, took his ticket and passed on.

With stealth and much caution John unpinned the oilsilk and took out one of the five hundred-dollar greenbacks, intending to use it in buying a ticket from Barstow to Los Angeles. Before going far from Barstow the conductor came around. John offered him the greenback. He looked at John's clothes scornfully, at the money suspiciously and at John himself ferociously. With a growling bark he snapped out the words: "Pay, sir, or get off. No words about it, either."

John wilted, withered and shrunk up into human nothingness. He tried to speak, but his throat seemed dry, parched and paralyzed. A tear came to his eye and dropped from his quivering cheek down on the rejected, offending greenback. The high and mighty

official saw it trickle down and fall. His heart told him it was wrung from a young and suffering soul. The conductor was angry, mad at himself, disgusted at his own weakness, for he felt moved by some inner force, even against his wish, will, head or judgment, to say to John, with brotherly gentleness: "Well, young man, is that all the money you have about you?"

"No," answered John, with quivering lips; "I have another like this one."

"Can't change no such large bill. Besides, it may be counterfeit; anyhow, won't take any such risks. That is an old, played-out trick."

"I think it must be good," replied the crushed and hungry poet, with innocent simplicity.

Oh, how that conductor hated himself for his own emotions of humanity—humanity to a ragged, stranded wayfarer! Humanity to a tramp! He had one comfort; the weakness was not chronic. That he yielded once may be overlooked, for he reached the uttermost limit of such tolerance and generosity to rags and vagrants by telling John concisely: "Fireman sick; drank alkali water. You take his place; shovel coal; work your fare to San Bernardino."

John bowed his head in assent, carefully replacing the bill in its oilsilk wrap, and put it down through the vest pocket, where he pinned it to the interlining. When the conductor returned from taking up tickets he beckoned to John to follow him. He rose, clutching his bundle—his blankets wrapped tightly around

the old, lank carpet bag—and followed the conductor through the cars to the engine.

They gave him a few brief instructions. He looked around to find what he thought was a safe place for his precious bundle. Having disposed of it to his satisfaction, he took the shovel and began work. The shoveling was too heavy for his starving, exhausted condition. The work was beyond his strength. Moreover, the heat was like hades. Still, he had American grit, if not strength and experience.

He shoveled the heavy coal into the yawning furnace till his head seemed swelling, frying and ready to burst with fervent heat. His eyes, too, were flashing fire and his ears were roaring with pent-up thunders. After that all things near and far began to reel, pitch, rise, fall, roll around and grow dark. John fainted and fell, almost plunging into the fire-box. The sick fireman and engineer hurried around to see what was the matter. In the bustle and confusion they brushed, knocked or accidentally pushed off John's bundle. It fell, bumping, bounding and rolling away down the embankment, among the cacti.

When John recovered the train was moving upgrade, with less than usual speed. He looked around wildly, asking the sick fireman with frantic alarm: "Where is my bundle?"

"Oh, that fell off the train. It is back a few miles on the desert. We saw it go tumbling off down into the cut."

John had but one thought, one purpose, which was to find that bundle—the old carpet bag, holding

Dynamite's quarter of a million dollars. He was quick to decide and quicker to act. Grabbing his old hat and shabby coat, he jumped madly, recklessly from the moving train. He fell, or rather was thrown, whirling, rolling down among weeds. He was stunned, bruised and utterly bewildered. When he had collected his faculties enough to rise to his feet the train was out of sight. He was alone in the desert with the yucca, cacti and sage. He was so excited and confused that he could not tell which way to go. All was sameness. There came no answer to his troubled question—which way is backward toward the lost bundle? The grade of the long, winding track told him nothing. Solitude and desolation were dumb and without suggestive hints. True, the track, the roadbed was there, like two iron bands in a desert. Yet that told nothing. He felt in his coat pocket for the compass. It was not there. He searched among the weeds and along the track, but did not find it anywhere. He never found that compass.

Finally he remembered the sun had been scorching his right cheek. This gave him a clew. He turned northward, which seemed to him like going south; but he was always being turned around.

He was hungry and trembling. He reeled and staggered like a drunken man; but the thought of that lost satchel steadied his nerves.

His face was black and bleeding, his hands cut, torn and filled with the spines of the terrible prickly pear. Nevertheless his will dragged his shrinking, tortured,

lacerated body back several miles over railway ties at no laggard pace.

He was looking, searching on both sides of the track for his tramp-like bundle. Then he thought of the possibility of some wayfarer passing along and finding that trust given into his hands by Dynamite. This thought was indeed bitter. To receive a trust and then prove negligent or recreant was both treason and dishonor. For a Martindale this was impossible.

As his spirit was dragging his weak, protesting body over the ties he saw, far ahead of him, a man, who was examining something which he held in his hands. John was sure he held in his hands the satchel and blankets. He was wild with fear and excitement. He forgot the directions of Dynamite. He ran; he shouted; he waved his hands and arms in frantic gesticulations.

The man came on toward him with the slow pace that marks the section hand—from the Atlantic to the broad Pacific—that pace which is neither walking nor standing still, a sort of progressive, glacier-like movement.

John continued to run. His breath came in short, quick gasps. But the glacier-like progress of the section man did not change.

As John drew near him he held out his hand to the man, saying between gasps: "You—you have found my bundle. How glad I am! I was so troubled. It is of no value to any one but to me."

The man was a genial branch from dear old Erin, nor was he declined to dispute John's claim, for he

handed over the old satchel and blankets, saying, with cordial good humor: "Blessed Virgin! But you look as though you had taken a round with a coal car. That mug of yours would do for the cut of a senator in the newspapers, it is that black, scratched and bloody-looking. You are welcome to your old truck, broken looking glass, toothbrush and all. But mind you, me boy, if the things were any good you'd have to prove property before I'd give it up. That is fair and it's law. But that flabby old satchel bag is not worth lugging around the country. Take my advice and throw it away entirely, broken looking glass and all; but the blankets you may cut in two and give me one for me honesty."

John took out his old sharpened knife and, with the able assistance of the son of the Emerald isle, divided the blankets as he requested. In the single remaining blanket John rolled up his lank and despised carpet bag. He thanked the son of dear old Ireland and turned his face back southward.

"Hold on, me boy; the handcar will be here in a few minutes and we will give you a lift of six or eight miles toward San Berdo. A lousy old town you are going to. Faith, they'll have you in the hole in no time, with that face, coat and hat of yours."

"I am starving," was John's irrelevant reply. The genial Irishman told John when the handcar came up they would go through their dinner pails and give him what remained.

The handcar came pumping, springing, throbbing down toward them. It slowed up. The two jumped

on, sitting down on the car like Indians. The men searched their dinner buckets and gave freely and gladly all they had—some dry bread, spread with a thick layer of Samsonian butter, a large slice of cold boiled bacon and a rank-smelling raw onion. John ate all that was given him like one who is starving, without regard to taste or other minor points. They also gave him water and one more generous offered him a flask, telling him to take a "drop," which he did, thinking it would make the water less injurious and might relieve the terrible pain in his bruised and bleeding head.

When the handcar stopped John bade them adieu, with many thanks for their brotherly kindness. They, too, were lavish with advice, good wishes of luck and long life.

With a sinking heart John walked away southward. He wondered if it could be true, what these section men had told him. Was it possible that fortunate, well-fed people could be so utterly without pity, mercy or pagan charity? Could such people, by any stretch or twist, imagine themselves Christians? Could they think themselves followers of the lowly Nazarene, who had not where to lay his head, who made the feeding of the hungry, the clothing of the naked, the first and last and final test of righteousness, the one earmark that told the "sheep" from the "goats." John was amazed. He thought better of his countrymen, better of his ideal American, better of democratic institutions, better of law and human justice. He had much to learn and more to

suffer. The merciless malevolence of mankind he could neither believe nor understand.

He had seen a cow cast, fallen and at the mercy of the bellowing, hooking, horning herd; he had seen a woman fallen and every other woman's hand raised to push, crowd, hurl her lower down. But the deeds of cows and women he had overlooked as a freak of nature. That men were more just and merciful had been the pride of his budding manhood. Now was this cherished idol to be broken and hurled in dishonor from its noble pedestal? The thought was more cruel and heart-breaking than the pain in his head, face and injured knee.

He was growing quite lame. In his first wild excitement he had given little thought to his own personal feelings. Now he realized that in jumping from the moving car he had re-sprained his leg. It was growing stiff and very painful, while his bruised and bleeding face was swelling and fast closing his left eye.

Notwithstanding his bodily distress he walked on without stopping till long after sunset. He was almost afraid to sit down for fear he would not be able to get up and walk. However, about ten o'clock he came to a cut. Here he found a small groove or slight gully on the dark, shadowy side. In this groove he spread out his blanket; then wrapped himself in its gray folds. He was reclining and wholly concealed by the little banks of earth on each side—a hiding place and a bed. He was growing cautious. He al-

ways placed the satchel under his left arm, for so Dynamite had directed, and John obeyed orders.

He was tired almost beyond the limit of human endurance. He slept as only the young and weary can sleep. He dreamed Vulcan was using his head for an anvil while hammering out long, two-edged knives for Uncle Collis to cut the flour sacks of the nations of men. His sleep grew more troubled by frightful visions of famine, pestilence and war.

About midnight he was awakened by some cause, some sound or unusual commotion. His head was less painful, but his left eye was closed by his swollen face. His knee was quite stiff and his bruised, scratched and skinned face was throbbing and burning. He wondered what could have wakened him when he was so tired. Soon he knew, for a voice loud, fierce and angry was addressing some one, who listened in meekness and silence.

John raised his head till he could see over the enclosing sides of his trough-like bed. He looked down the track toward San Bernardino. He saw two shadowy forms coming near. One was much larger and taller than the other. The larger one was carrying something thrown over his shoulder like a bag or gunnysack. It seemed heavy, for he bent as if carrying a heavy burden. When they reached the shadowy cut they halted near where John was lying concealed by the friendly darkness and the little hollow in the embankment. They were in the full moonlight, while John was in the double shadow, or shade.

The athlete remained standing, while the smaller

man dropped down wearily on the end of a projecting tie. He seemed an invalid, for he was stooped and coughed frequently. The moon shone on his face, which was both delicate and deadly pale. They were dressed in the cheapest of cheap clothing, old and much worn and soiled. Their raiment was a national shame and reproach, for the men were plainly honest workers. Their hands were large and told of a race of toilers. The clear, cloudless sky let down the moonlight so it was almost light as day. Besides, they were very near and in the full light.

John had slept with the blanket over his head and thrown lightly over his face. Now, with his right hand pressed up against the side of the gully, he held up the corner of the gray blanket so he could see them without being himself seen.

He saw the invalid look up at his brawny comrade, with sorrow and unutterable tenderness, saying, in a voice of gentle, loving entreaty: "Oh, don't, George. Don't let these little things make you doubt the wisdom and goodness of God. Life is full of trials. What matters one or two more or less? Man may err. He always has and always may. Still, God is wise and his mercy endures forever. All we suffer now may be for our good."

"For our hell!" shrieked the other, with increasing fury, smiting his right fist into his left palm with a force that sounded like an explosion. "Yes, I might have borne it myself, with reasonable, pent-up rage, if you, my poor sick brother, had not been included in their damnable sentence. But to give you thirty days

in their hell-hole, as well as thirty days to me! Curse them and their seed forever! Curse them with all the curses known to men and to gods! Now I can understand what hell and the devils were made for; to roast such canting hypocrites through all eternity. Now I can understand the wish of that Roman—that all Rome had but one head, so he could strike it off with one blow. I wish that accursed town had but one head, so I might chop it off at one whack!

"Oh, I wish I was a cyclone; I'd sweep that old town off into the Death's Valley and cover it up with hot sand. I wish I was an earthquake; I'd swallow them down and lick my chops for more of the same kind. Now, Jimmy, you needn't roll up your eye and groan, nor lift up your poor skinny hands to me. I am no better than God. He poured down fire onto Sodom, because he had the power and the coal oil. I would do the same, but lack the power and the crude oil. That's all the difference. I am no better than your orthodox God. I can tell you that right here.

"What's hell and eternal damnation for? Tell me that. It is God's little cinch on us poor, weak, silly worms. It is the trump card of the churches. It is a hot-hole where they generously send thinkers who don't come to their shop for a certified passport to glory, paying them their required rates. If your loving God tortures, burns his children with brimstone, tar, pitch and sulphur, throughout all eternity, world without end, for the little slips, falls, fads and foibles of fools, because they can't believe what is unreasonable, what is to their understanding absurd, then

what should I, a common, mortal man, do to a town that gives my poor, sick brother thirty days in their infernal jail because he is moneyless and starving? What should I do to them if I had the power? Answer me that!" growled the giant, with hissing fury.

"Give them your pity, your tears, your sorrow, your love and your pardon," answered the invalid with sweet serenity. "I feel only grief at their blindness, their unholy laws, their narrow, selfish greed, their total misapprehension of the direct teachings of Christ, their utter failure in understanding the fundamental principles of righteousness and human brotherhood. I could weep for their blindness as Christ wept over Jerusalem!" continued the weary invalid, with the rapt ecstasy of a persecuted saint. "My darling brother George, we have lived out that sentence. That it was unjust and unchristian is a great comfort to me. Those thirty days were indeed an hourly burden and mortification to the flesh. Let us forget that grievous burden and not take it along with us and carry it about with us forever. Cast it off utterly. I never wish to think again of jail, rock piles nor chain gangs. They shall not fill my heart with hatred, as they have filled my outer man with vermin. I will not consent to bear malice nor blight my heart and soul with fraternal hatred; hence I forgive and my soul is calm and at peace."

"I am glad you can forget and forgive if it is any comfort to you, Jimmy. I hope you may," shouted the giant with overflowing fury. "But as for myself, eternal hatred is my last word for such. I will never

forget nor forgive such damnable, cursed injustice. Just think of it, my brother; here in America, the boasted 'land of the thieves and the home of the knave,' or some such lying twaddle. Look at us. Our forefathers fought under Miles Standish, under Washington, under Jackson, under Grant and Pinkerton. We are and always have been a race of honest, groveling workers, earning our bread by the sweat of our brow. But I am a thinker and not a slave. We are the last of our race and it is well for us that it is so.

"You are an invalid. I worked for two. I saved some of my wages for a rainy day. But I refused to vote as my employer dictated. I lost my job. We came to California for your health. I paid our fare out and board here at cut-throat prices. I spent all; starved and begged for work long before I begged for bread.

"I might have starved and died in silence, like many others, as those cursed demons desire, but I would not let you starve, even if begging, asking charity is the crime of crimes in this gold-worshiping, money-grabbing region.

"I made us a den by a mountain stream, but we were hunted out and down as vagrants, with no visible means of support.

"Whose fault was it that my money melted away like snow under their fiery skies? Curse them forever, as they say God curses those who offend Him. Oh, revel! I rejoice in cursing them, like some pious pope, with his bulls and holy damnations. I glory in

sending out my whole herd to curse them, the old cows and sucking calves included.

"Jimmy, you needn't lift up your hands in horror. I am no better than an outraged pope," screamed the athlete, in vindictive wrath.

"Good, kind, loving brother George, my heart bleeds for your unforgiving spirit. It is sad when good men grow bitter and give way to wicked thoughts and sinful words. You are so good and kind to me. I wish you could feel love and like kindness for all of God's proud, weak, erring children. You know that all men are the children of God and therefore brethren. Brother, remember the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."

"Well, if they are all my brothers," sneered the athlete, in angry scorn, "they are a mean, measly lot. I can say that for them without lying. If we are brothers then this is a family quarrel, the more bitter and relentless because of the kinship. Hereafter, Jimmy, if you will be more happy because I bottle up my wrath then I will promise to do my cursing on the sly, within my soul, inside, and without words. But, Jimmy, you are not in this family quarrel. You are counted out of the rumpus. For your sake I will try to hold in a little, even if I burst by pressure of pent-up wrath. I will try and talk of other subjects—the weather, scenery and onward march of human progress. It really and truly is good to breathe the air of freedom, even in a desert which offers nothing but starvation and death," sighed George gloomily, somewhat quieted if not appeased.

"I am hungry," said Jimmy, as if to turn the current of their thoughts. The athlete took out from his sack a large watermelon, which he broke open by rubbing the rind on the iron rail and pulling the melon open with his strong hands. Each took a half, as if suffering from both hunger and thirst. John closed his eyes, that he might not covet or grow envious, for his own hunger made him wolfish and unreasonable.

The brothers continued to talk and John gathered from what they said that they were on their way back east. They were starting on a perilous tramp, going mostly by night, as the hot sun of the desert was too overpowering for the invalid. The elder brother, the athlete, waited on and cared for the younger, sickly brother with all the tenderness of motherhood. His anger and rage was like that of a grizzly protecting her young; the madness of maternal love stirring the blood of a passionate giant. When they had eaten the melon they sat down together and the invalid leaned his head heavily over on his athletic brother, who remained silent for a few moments, when he burst out again with redoubled vehemence, saying with burning ire: "Oh, poor Jimmy! Let me have it out this time or it will burst out in places; just this once and then I will hold my peace—hold down the valve if I have to sit on it. Think of those blasphemous monsters who call themselves the followers of Him who had not where to lay His head. Think of them arresting us because we were utterly destitute; arresting us for tramps, beggars and vagabonds; robbing us, firstly, of our only remaining birthright; rob-

bing us of our liberty; them stealing our labor, all because some boodle-taking partisan, without fear of God or love of man, got some infernal statute run through the machine to rob the poor of both liberty and labor in the interest of the cunning dodgers of taxes and grabbers of wealth earned by others. Yes; it was the most devilish case of robbery on record—the robbery of the poor and unfortunate by the rich and strong.

"Thirty days in their accursed jail for being unable to pay hotel bills or some other trumped-up abomination; thirty days of stolen liberty; thirty days of stolen labor; then to kick us out, filthy, ragged, moneyless, alove with parasites, reeking with prison odors; then, to cap the climax of brutal barbarity, give us just twenty-four hours to get out of their most holy and righteous town, or they would redouble the dose, with several minor improvements.

"Oh, I wish I had that city by the throat! I could clean my hands afterward. Curse them and their spawn forever! Now I may be able to hold down the valve of my anger. At least, poor Jimmy, I will not annoy you again with this diabolical case of man's inhumanity to man."

"That is a good brother!" exclaimed the invalid with sweet, tender approval. "They shall not annoy us any more. They have robbed, insulted and degraded our bodies, but let us respect our manhood, our God-given souls. But they shall not ruin our lives nor our faith in God and hope in the universal brotherhood of all of God's children. Let us not re-

sist evil, but love our enemies, bless them that curse us and despitefully use us. They are not the followers of the lowly Nazarene. They are worse than pagans, for they steal the name of Christ to work out their heathen lusts. Let us be good to ourselves and forget them and their cunning abominations," said Jimmy, in a pleading, coaxing voice.

"It's a bargain," ejaculated George, in a strong, masterful tone.

"Oh, you make me so happy," replied the invalid. "Come, brother, let us be going. I am rested and feel as though I could walk a long way before the sun grows hot to-morrow. Give me your hand, George. I seem to gain strength and courage whenever I hold your strong, bold hand." The athlete gave his hand to the invalid, assisting him to his feet. They passed on out of sight and hearing, the athlete leading the invalid tenderly by the hand.

CHAPTER XII.

John was strangely moved. He was cold and trembling. He was quivering with intense, sympathetic excitement. His thoughts grew gloomy and depressing. A sense, a feeling of impending sorrow, a permonition of coming evil, admonished and appalled him. A sad, sinking sensation of sorrow lay heavy on his heart; the same unutterable grief, felt when he saw his mother white and cold and dead.

Nevertheless, he reasoned with himself. He thought of his thousand dollars of available money. This certainly was reassuring. He asked himself why he should fear, quake and tremble because he had heard the thrilling wrongs of some other tramps. His case was not the same. He had money. He should not beg nor trouble others with his hunger or rags. Furthermore, he had ten cents to buy bread as soon as he reached San Bernardino. He chided and exhorted himself. He told himself he was beyond the reach, the clutch of the godless vagrancy statutes.

He resolved to be circumspect—to starve rather than to ask the bread of fraternal charity. Moreover, he planned and laid out his future course of action. He would walk to San Bernardino, go to the bank, present one of the greenbacks, get it changed, buy a ticket to Los Angeles, find Lawyer Rush, consult him

about finding his brother, Hugh Martindale, then hasten on the first train to San Francisco to deliver the satchel and its contents to Dynamite.

Having settled these things in his mind, he tried to sleep, but the haunting phantoms of human wretchedness mocked and jeered him for his selfish inaction. That he was to be a factor and a voice crying out of the darkness grew plain to his poetic, enthusiastic soul. Yes; he felt this irresistible moral duty, charge, commission or obligation as never before. His soul saw and knew what his bodily eyes never could have seen. He must obey the spiritual voice that bade him become the tireless, unpaid, villified, hated, persecuted champion of the fallen and outcast, of the poor, hungry, homeless children of the Universal Father. John was thus ordained by the sons of the desert, by the words of George and Jimmy.

Long before daylight John was walking with as much haste as his lameness would allow. His cheek was much swollen and inflamed. His eye was closed and a great lump was puffed out above his eye, like a red and purple wen. Besides, that side of his face was turning a green and black and blue color. He looked hideous. His handsome and refined face looked repulsive, vicious and dissipated.

When it was daylight he took out his cracked and broken mirror and looked at his face. He could not believe that he looked so villainous. He thought it was the cracked glass that distorted his face. Adonis himself would be frightful with a swollen nose, puffed-out, scratched, blood-stained cheek, purple and black

eye swollen shut, a lump over his eyebrow like a black biscuit. Indeed at that moment John Martindale had little of the beauty of the girl-faced poet.

It was near noon when John reached the town. He saw a hydrant on a vacant lot. He went there and bathed his face and hands, drinking freely, as he was almost dying from thirst. Hunger tormented him less than thirst.

He put his hand in his pocket for his dime to buy a loaf of bread from a baker's wagon that was driving his way, but the dime was not in any of his pockets. He searched as only a starving man can search, but found no coin. It was gone. It must have fallen out while he was shoveling coal or when he jumped from the train.

He was disappointed, but not discouraged. He limped onward as fast as he could, for hunger was clamorous. He must change his bill and buy a full warm dinner, as a treat and a celebration. He walked firmly if not proudly into the first bank, asking in a voice sweet and well-modulated for the change for his five hundred-dollar greenback. He shoved it over to the cashier, who looked at it long and with great care and distrust. At length the cashier silently turned his eyes on John, like two Mount Lowe searchlights. That glaring gaze gave John a dazed, blinded, startled, confused sensation. He felt a guilty, insulted flush burning his sore and swollen face.

Inasmuch as he was innocent of all evil or intentional wrongdoing, his courage remained, even beyond his expectation, for he looked at the man with

his one eye with all the boldness of youthful innocence if not with some flushes of Fourth of July defiance.

Again the cashier turned his eyes down on the bill. He drew his eyebrows together in a wise and penetrating frown. After more silent, stern inspection he took the bill back with him to another bank official, who was standing in an attitude of intense interest, if not suspicious antagonism. Together the men looked at the bill. Then they came up and looked at John, at his injured, distorted face, at his old, torn hat, at his soiled and tattered clothes, at his tramp-like bundle, even down to his worn-out, grinning shoes, showing his naked toes, like dusty teeth.

At length the cashier asked him, with freezing politeness, where he obtained such a bill. John answered promptly: "It was given me in Arizona for service rendered." He remembered he had promised Dynamite to tell a few business-like half-truths.

"Indeed?" sneered the bank official, icily. "May I ask what service you rendered?"

"Of course you may; but is it a customary inquiry?" answered John, by way of evasion.

"Not exactly customary, but under the present circumstances we are justified in being both cautious and impertinent. You must know these bills are not common in California. Neither do men in your present condition usually have such bills in their possession. Have you no smaller bills?"

"I have nothing smaller," replied John, sadly.

"How did you reach our city?" asked the artful cashier, with business directness.

"I walked since long before daylight. I was anxious to change my money so as to take the train for Los Angeles. I tried to change the bill to pay my fare down from Barstow, but no one was willing to change so large a bill. Yet the conductor let me shovel coal to pay my fare. But my bundle rolled off the train and I jumped off to find it. See; my swollen face tells how I struck on the ground," said John, with sturdy, honest simplicity.

Again the cashier stepped back as if to consult with his superior. Then that gentleman came forward and opened the case by asking John where he came from and if he had any friends or personal acquaintances in the state.

John answered without hesitation: "I am from Ann Arbor, where I recently graduated. I am going to Los Angeles to consult Lawyer Judson R. Rush concerning my half-brother, whose address is to me unknown."

"Can you read Greek?"

"You may try me and see," replied John grimly. They handed him a copy of Homer's Iliad. He read and translated a few lines with calm, quiet modesty and shoved the book back. However, they continued to talk or rather question him on various points that had little bearing on the worth of the bill; almost like legislative filibustering, to kill time and some bill unfavorable to special privilege.

At length John grew tired of this endless chain of questions and asked the cashier if the bill was counterfeit.

"No; it is not counterfeit. It is a genuine greenback. That is what troubles us. If it were only counterfeit the case would be simple, but as it is the case is complex and difficult."

"Then let the difficulty end. Give me my money and I will take it elsewhere," said John, without fear.

"Not quite so fast, young man. We have been talking to hold you here till the marshal comes. Here he comes!"

"You better go along quietly and make no scene or disturbance," suggested the cashier, cunningly.

But John's American was roused. He asked for his money, saying: "Give me my bill, my five hundred-dollar greenback. Hand it over. It is mine!"

"Go slow, young man; all in good time. The court will decide the case. You will have a chance to prove your right to this money. Things look very suspicious. We will hold the bill till the thing is decided."

"Give me my money. In law I am no more compelled to prove how I came by my five hundred dollars than others how they come by their money. I am not obliged to prove my innocence. It is for you to prove my guilt."

"That is just what we intend to do," added the high bank official, with gratuitious malice.

Then turning to the marshal he said, in hard, polished tones: "See here, Marshal, this tramp, this tattered, blear-eyed hobo, is trying to change a five hundred-dollar bill! Look at his torn clothes, bruised, battered and scratched face. Look when he walks

how he limps—proof of his victim's awful struggle and desperate resistance. Do you, can any one, think such a looking vagrant came honestly by a five hundred-dollar bill?"

John began to realize his danger. He felt the net, the snare, close round his helpless, entangled feet. This called into action his latent, unknown powers of resistance. His one visible eye was large, brown and brilliant with flashes of defiance. But when the marshal said, "Come," John did not stir, but asked: "Where is your warrant? For what am I arrested?"

"We want no warrant to arrest a tramp. Your old rags are our warrant," answered the marshal.

Then John turned to the marshal and in a few words told how he jumped from the car, tearing his clothes and hurting his face. The marshal looked at John wonderingly, saying: "Ah! so you are that fool tramp that made that reckless jump? My nephew, who is no other than the sick fireman, told me about last night. He thought you broke your blamed neck. He was coming to-night to tell me what they did with the body; sold to the medical students is the usual end of tramps!"

John was imaginative. In fancy he felt the cold, sharp steel of the surgeon's knife, ripping and slashing through his quivering flesh. He shivered visibly. Some thought it was a sign of murder and highway robbery.

John asked the marshal if he would be allowed to write to Judson Rush, as he wanted him to come up and defend him. Then at the name of Rush there

was a quick look passed among the bank people, as much as to say: "What, Judson Rush? We better look a little out. He is bad medicine to take! Jud Rush!" Again the marshal said: "Come!" and John went with him in silence.

Now it so happened that this particular marshal was not in love with his official functions. The wholesale arrest of the hungry and utterly destitute annoyed and disgusted him. Such arrests shocked his naturally humane instincts. At all events, the rockpile and chain gang were revolting to his American ideas of civil and constitutional rights and liberties. To his mind a hungry, starving man had as much right to beg food as preachers had to beg money to send clothes and fixing to the heathen. The marshal was not orthodox. That was the trouble with him. But he was fat and lazy and had to earn his bread and the bread for his wife and seven healthy, hearty children. Furthermore, he could not shovel dirt or handle a pick without greater offense to his indolent nature. Therefore he remained in his position of human retriever, notwithstanding his loathing and dislike for the service.

Now, here was another case of more than usual brutality and atrocity. It went against his idea of American decency. Moreover, he had his own ideas of law and justice and sometimes his own methods of procedure. In this case he cut the Gordian knot of justice and let the prisoner go on about his business.

True, he took John off, away from the bank, but he was not going to deliver him at the jail. John should

be made to escape, even if he, the marshal, had to run off himself and leave the prisoner! On this point his mind was fixed. He had been asked to arrest John as a tramp, a vagrant, a hobo, a vile and suspicious character, doubtless a highwayman. They could thus hold him in jail till his supposed victim or victims were discovered. Meantime the bank generously held the five hundred-dollar bill.

However, John was permitted to take his bundle along with him, as he walked away from the bank with feeling akin to those expressed by the cursing athlete of the desert.

Inasmuch as John was not expecting nor asking mercy or favor, he was abashed, confounded, thunderstruck, when the marshal said to him in fatherly tenderness: "Now, young man, I have a mind to let you escape from me. You clip off toward the west. I will go toward the east. I shall not catch you very soon. Do you sabe? Do you catch on?"

"Yes, sir, I understand; but will it be right? Will it not injure your position to show mercy to a tramp? You should not be recreant to your official duty," said John thoughtfully.

"Recreant to your grandmother!" snorted the high exponent of law and order, with infinite scorn. "What? Would you stay and be sent up for thirty beastly days? Take my advice, young man. Skip! Git! The door is open. I tell you to run for it. You stand; you hesitate; you ask me if it is right. What do you mean by right? Right for the strong, the ruling rich, the majority, to snap up the hungry, starving poor, steal

their liberty, rob them of their birthright and their labor because of their destitution? They have no appeal, no redress. Their hunger is their crime. Their rags deliver them to the jailer. Their poverty convicts them. Their misery sentences them to the chain gang. Boy, are you a fool or a martyr?"

"I don't know. I have thought law and justice were one and the same, but it seems they are not," answered John with sorrow, like the Man of Sorrows.

"Nonsense! Fiddlesticks! Laws are no more sacred, just and holy than are the lawmakers themselves. Look at our lawmakers. Look at me; I am the flower and fruit of six thousand years of law. I am a 'bute,' a 'bird,' as the kids say. Now, young man, do as I tell you. Light out! Scud! Go to Lawyer Rush; send him up here to the bank for your five hundred dollars. When I reach that corner I shall go into the saloon on official business, of course. You whip around the corner. Vamose! Git!"

John obeyed. Instinct also told him to go. Moreover, John had not scaled those sublime moral heights reached by the pagan Socrates, who refused life and liberty under greater pressure. John was a first-class American product, alive and quite human. We will say this much in his favor: The old satchel and its contents, belonging to Dynamite, gave wings to his feet. He was a messenger, a carrier. He flew around the corner. He did not stop to limp. The lame leg had to travel! He left town without regard to road or direction. He went as he never walked before. He dare not look behind him. The clutch of the

law had been relaxed. He fled as from the horrors of the holy Spanish inquisition!

As he fled he wondered that men took him for a felon—the son of Colonel Martindale a dangerous character. He had thought better of men's judgment and men's mercy. He was more surprised at men than at their laws. He had seen train robbers; now he had met the other side. He found himself comparing the men and their methods. He was shocked at the result of his comparison. It did not harmonize with his theories of social standards. He was angry with himself for what he called his social and moral apostasy. He reached the low water mark of degeneracy when he recalled the fact that Jesus chose harlots and outcasts for comrades.

John had felt the grip, the touch of the law and order class. The withering gangrene of that contamination was developing. He was both astonished and grieved. Something had gone out of his life forever. Now he understood the hatred, the rebellion, the eternal taint of prison corruption. His sympathetic imagination magnified and greatly exaggerated. He had been more than arrested. He had been incarcerated and vaccinated with the felon's fury, hatred and undying rebellion. A good, honest, man-loving, God-fearing young man was lost to conservatism. He then and there joined the ranks of the opposition. It is ever thus that iconoclasts are inspired.

Notwithstanding his mental and moral commotion, his feet continued their flight. That he had been hungry was forgotten. An evil greater than hunger

assailed him—the misery of the poor and oppressed. He, John Martindale, who traced his lineage back to the great lords of England, chose his part henceforth with the "Submerged Tenth." To him the social world was inverted. The high were the low, the great the small, the honored were steeped in dishonor, the virtuous the vile, the criminal the apostle of truth.

John questioned his own vanity. He wondered if his injured head was making him mad. He had heard all the world lift up its voice as one man and curse, villify and denounce those who felt and thought as he was forced to think. Indeed, an anarchist was but another name for Satan and the unpardonable sin. Why was he doomed, fated to cast his lot with the despised, the execrated, the outcasts of earth? Then he thought of Christ, his words, his teachings, his sorrows and brutal, merciless death. What, was he, John Martindale, to shrink from ignominy, from injustice and false accusations? His work, his mission, his duty was not to drift with the current. The scales had fallen from his eyes. He saw the truth, the eternal right. He was terrified!

CHAPTER XIII.

John continued his flight. He asked no questions. He avoided people. He followed the road pointed out by the marshal. Wherever the highway led there he went. He drew near a large town or city. Again he drank at a hydrant and bathed his swollen face. He looked back behind him. He saw a great cloud of dust and heard the bark of dogs. He was certain it was the baying of bloodhounds on his trail. In fact, it was only some vicious boys teasing a stray cur. Again that awe-inspiring bark, which to his tense, excited, overwrought nerves was the blood-curdling yelp of the man-slaying sleuth-hounds. He trembled and cold chills added to his tremor. He saw a man sauntering toward him who had the air of a policeman. He looked at John as a cat looks at a mouse. John tried to avoid him. This was unwise. The man turned and stepped up beside John and asked impertinently: "You seem in a hurry. What's up? Where are you going at that pace?"

"I am going to Los Angeles," answered John, with civility. "I have no money to pay fare or buy food. I am starving and want to reach Los Angeles while I have strength to walk. I shall not beg nor ask food, so you need not arrest me just because I am starving. I have a constitutional right to go on the highway, to

walk your streets. I shall not annoy the well-fed or fortunate by unseemly prayers nor appeals. I may starve. I may drop down helpless. I may even die, but I will not ask bread from such as you." There was a bitter scorn and defiance in the voice of hungry, starving John Martindale. But the policeman laughed derisively at the fierce, romantic resolves of the starving wayfarer. He said, without passion or rancor: "Bully for you; wish there was more of your kind going along this way. But it's all no use. You can't hide your hunger. It is written on your face, written on your torn and pinned-up rags, written on your bundle, written on your old hat, written on your grinning, open-mouthed shoes, written on your dirty shirt, written on your uncut hair and fuzzy cheeks. Oh, we know you tramps, you vags, you hobos by your very footfall. We spot you at a glance. There are no need of words to tell us who you are. Still, you may avoid arrest if you keep up that pace, but if you stop, sit down, go around to kitchen doors or look into a bakery window with ravenous, longing eyes, then I would not vouch for your liberty," declared the tramp-catcher, without shame or one touch of human sympathy.

"This must be an awful town," murmured John mournfully. "It was well for that man who fell among thieves that he went down to Jericho and not to this merciless town."

"Oh, this town is all right. This is Riverside, the new Eden, the pride and boast of the world—that is of southern California. I tell you this town is a daisy

compared to some other towns. Now, there is millionaire Pasadena. That town takes the cake in this tramp-catching business. There they snap up thirteen a day as a good, healthy average. Their papers boast of their great hauls as a bait for millionaire investors. If you are going to Los Angeles pass around on the other side of Pasadena; give the Crown of the Valley a wide berth. You are not the kind of tourist they are bidding up for. No, sir; they want the plug hat, four-in-hand, bob-tail contingent. But tramps! You're not their kind of meat. You're not going to buy their Mount Lowe bonds nor their played-out ranches. My youthful tenderfoot, steer clear of Pasadena. Remember the warning of a Riverside policeman: Never strike Pasadena for a 'hand-out.' Starve, steal or hang yourself, but never go there 'ahungered and begging bread.'" So saying the tramp-tormentor turned and entered what might have been a saloon or some such resort of the guardians of the well-to-do.

Starving and filled with sad presentiments of evil, John hurried forward. There was a quivering, ominous, sinking sensation in his breast. His one open eye was irritated by the ever-flying dust of the dry, rainless summer. Furthermore, by sympathy it was also becoming inflamed, which added to his already disreputable appearance. He often wiped his eyes with his one soiled handkerchief. His eyes seemed to give him much trouble, whether it was from tears or other reasons is still a matter of conjecture.

Near evening he came to a flowing stream. He drank and washed out his handkerchief, folding it and hanging it over his injured face by placing the end underneath his hat. The damp, cool cloth relieved the burning pain.

The moon was bright and he walked on hour after hour on the main traveled road. His progress was not all he desired, for his lameness and blistered feet were troublesome. Moreover, his hunger and weakness were increasing. Nevertheless his American grit dragged his protesting body onward with ever decreasing speed.

At length he dropped down beneath a live oak to rest or pray, it is not known clearly which. At least his posture and attitude were those of prayer. He was on his knees, with his bundle pressed up against his stomach, after the manner of the starving, and his head bowed over against the body of the tree.

He drew himself up with difficulty and staggered wearily onward. The night was better traveling than the dusty, burning sunlight.

Long after midnight, as he was going along a wild, desolate waste, he saw walking in the road, coming toward him, a being that had the outlines of a man. As he drew nearer John stepped in behind the screening shadows of a clump of castor beans. The object was a sight to make a strong man quake. John thought it some lunatic, escaped from the violent ward. He was without hat, coat, vest or shirt. His form was gaunt and skinny and his breast and arms bristling with hair. As this wretched creature drew

near John saw that he carried a loose coiled rope in one hand. His feet were bare and his tattered trousers were frightful. Such trousers on a man in America! They were not a garment; they were hanging rags and shreds. Around or on one leg were tatters reaching to the knee. On the other leg was a long, open, slit piece of fluttering, flying rags, which concealed but not clothed. As the wretched creature walked his rags flopped and flapped and blew out behind him. John watched it or him in breathless wonder. He even thought himself going mad and this but a creature of his frenzied brain. The face was little more than bristling beard and locks of long, matted, uncombed hair. This man, if such still be called men, halted, looked around and then ascended a large, live oak near where John was standing. The dense foliage concealed the being. John thought the thing might have a sort of nest up among the branches and had simply gone up to sleep.

John was about to move on when he saw the bare feet and hairy legs far out on a large lower limb. The being sat down on the bare limb, intent on something he was doing with the rope. His movements were swift and excited. The treetop cast a shadow over part of his body, but the hairy legs were in the full light.

All at once John's heart gave a throb and rose up choking in his throat, as the man hung down from the limb by one hand. The other hand seemed tied at his side. His one hand let go the limb. He was

hanging, swinging, swaying, writhing, whirling by the neck. It was suicide!

John was a university man and had some nerve and presence of mind. He took out his old sharpened knife, dropped his bundle, rushed forward and sprung upward and severed the rope. The man fell heavily to the ground, gasping, choking and clutching with his free hand at his throat. John cut the rope from his neck and freed his tied hand. The man's neck was not broken, although it was cut by the rope and bleeding freely.

The man was conscious, but silent or sullen. He would not answer John, who talked to him with infinite pity and brotherly sorrow. He took the wet handkerchief off from over his eye and with it bound up the man's bleeding neck. The man sat up, moaning in a despairing, hopeless way. When he saw how good and kind John really was he seemed to relent and let John do by him as he wished, even to putting on that shirtwaist shirt made by the King's Daughters, soiled, yet without rents or rips.

The man gave his name as Samuel Adams. But it was when he told the reason or causes which led him on to attempt self-murder that John cried aloud to the listening trees, the rocks, the stars and the silent firmament. His sympathy was like balm to the suffering soul of Samuel Adams. He grew hopeful, almost cheerful.

Samuel Adams was one of the great roving multitude known to the public as the Unemployed. He was a skilled workman, willing—more than willing to

work. He had a wife and three children living by the San Gabriel river, in a hut or huts made of sticks and leaves of the fan palm. When he left them to hunt work they were in a state of utter destitution. He had hunted for work, traveled for work, begged for work, prayed for work, and had been arrested and sent up for a vagrant, a tramp, a hobo! From six different towns or cities he had gone forth after serving out a sentence, warned to leave inside of twenty-four hours or be again arrested. He had been driven from jail to jail, from chain gang to chain gang, till his clothes dropped off in rags. He had no shirt, no hat, no coat, no shoes, nothing but rags and nakedness.

Then the time came when he dared not show himself in the daytime, for once he had been arrested for indecent exposure, because his rags gave way in the wrong place at the wrong time. Since then he had clothed himself with darkness, prowling about in the night, milking cows in empty fruit cans and living by ways better guessed than told. As he narrated the story of his torments he grew fierce and excited, saying, with passionate pathos: "What can a poor, ragged devil like me do but to decently die? I could not get work to help my family. I only eat what might keep them alive. Six times I have been robbed of my liberty and my labor stolen by force of law. In the last eight months I have not received one cent for all my sweat and toil. They stole my labor without my consent, because I was poor, helpless and down under their cruel, merciless feet, while my wife and little hungry babies were left to starve. Now you say God

is good and loving to his suffering children. Do you call such things good? Do you call starving good?" demanded Samuel Adams, with increasing warmth.

"Not exactly good in and of themselves. Still, they may lead to good; either spiritual good or good to some other suffering soul," answered John, with more than usual weakness if not of actual doubt. "The ways of God are not our ways," added John, with more faith in the things taught him by his mother.

"Tell me this, what could a ragged, naked, friendless, hunted outcast like me do? Go home, a burden to my already starving wife or just give it up as a bad job and die? But you wouldn't even let me die. Now what are you going to do with me?"

"I don't know. I am starving myself, yet I have not once thought of self-murder. I do the best I can and the best I know and leave the outcome with God."

"I have heard that kind of talk before, but it is not very filling to an empty stomach. The preacher talks that kind, but comes around for men to pay him all the same. I have heard lots of fine words. The question is: What next?"

"Have you ever asked the King's Daughters to help you?"

"No. Who are they; some of Queen Vic's numerous brood?"

"They are good young ladies who obey the teachings of Jesus. They feed the hungry, clothe the naked. See; they made these trousers and gave them to me," said John, by way of evidence of their active Christianity.

"Young man," exclaimed Samuel Adams, dryly, "poor as I am, I would not trade my rags for those breeeches, if I had to wear them. I might wear my wife's skirts, but not a skirt on each leg; that is too much of a good thing," and the would-be angel laughed loud and long.

To have the work of those adorable young women mocked and jeered roused even starving John Martindale. He said, vehemently: "Sir, so long as I live all my trousers shall be made like these ample, full-legged breeches, in remembrance of the King's Daughters of Kansas!"

"Young friend, your sins must be great and many, that you give yourself such a penance!" laughed the hatless man of rags. John was glad to see him facetious and took his mild banter as a sign that the morbid spell was broken. John gave Samuel Adams his one blanket, telling him to put it around him, Indian fashion, and come along with him. Adams obeyed cheerfully.

They traveled on together, comparing miseries, torments and earthly tribulations—appalling pictures; rueful records.

About noon they reached the home huts of Samuel Adams. There was joy, tears—and nothing to eat—not so much as a cold potato or a boiled pumpkin. However, Mrs. Adams milked the goat and gave each a portion—about half a cup. Even this meager lunch seemed to renew John's strength and courage. Besides, he had less to carry, having given Mrs. Adams the blanket to cut up for her husband a pair of pants.

He wanted to hurry on and away from a sight so foreign to American theories of equality. The children were gaunt and skinny; the little three-year-old girl naked, brown and tanned like leather; the five-year-old boy had pinned about his loins an old flour sack, with the words "Stockton Mills" plain to be seen. The seven-year-old was clothed in tears, tan and modesty, for she drew an old gunnysack across her naked knees as she dropped down to the ground floor to make herself as small and compact as possible. The mother had on one garment, if rags and patches can be called a garment, but the children made a short cut and went back to nature, if not to fig-leaf decorations.

John, though starving himself, shed tears at the sight of that wretched group. He could hardly believe his eyes. Such misery! Such destitution! He could say or do little to comfort or console. The case was too desperate for mere words. He thought of his remaining five hundred-dollar bill. If he could ever get that changed then he could and would help them. This he promised to do as he bade them farewell, wondering if God also had forgotten the poor and ahungered.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was late in the afternoon when John reached Lamanda Park. He was trembling from hunger and fatigue. The hot sun and burning roadway had increased the inflammation of his face and eyes, while black and blue patches, variegated with purple, green and red, made his face a sight to behold! He dare not rest long, as at every rest his knee grew more stiff and painful. He hurried on, stopping only at hydrants to drink. The sight of men grew hateful, while the grins and giggles of women seemed demoniac. The madness of the starving was fermenting in his blood.

He came where the road was crossed by another road. He was uncertain which one to take. He asked a son of Belial which road was the shortest road to Los Angeles, as he wished to avoid traveling through the next town, evidently for some good reason. At this the son of Belial winked knowingly and then, with malice aforethought, wantonly and deceitfully told John to keep right on down Colorado Street till he reached Fair Oaks. That was his best route to Los Angeles.

John thanked his betrayer, in a faint, quavering voice, then limped on into the jaws of the tormenters of the destitute.

On down Colorado the ragged, starving, reeling wayfarer dragged his blistered feet. He was confused. He hesitated; then asked a citizen the best way for him to reach Los Angeles. The facetious citizen told him to go over to the corner of Fair Oaks and ask the large man standing there on the corner.

In the simplicity of virtuous youth John went over and addressed the person indicated. It was the city marshal. Enough! John was arrested and led off, reeling and staggering from starvation and exhaustion, into the foul pen called by taxpayers "the city prison." John was dazed and heartsick. All things earthly seemed to wave, turn, whirl, dip down and vault upward, swing back and forth, finally grow dark and fade away. John fainted. He was yanked off into the inclosure, unconscious, and flung into a corner as a drunken hobo. The satchel was rolled up under his coat and tied in place by a bit of the rope used by Samuel Adams. His coat was buttoned over the apparently empty carpet bag, for he had been afraid he might faint, fall or lose it in his increasing weakness and blindness. Within that reeking pen were twelve other children of hunger; the disinherited, "Submerged Tenth." They were all awaiting the morrow's sentence, although to be arrested for vagrancy, utter destitution, is to be already sentenced.

As it was evening when John was arrested, he was given no supper. It was not offered. Perhaps his being thought drunk was the reason. Moreover, he did not ask for food nor favors, therefore received none. Starvation was doing its work with unusual

swiftness. John had almost passed the mad stage and reached that of dreamy stupor.

The other twelve victims of man's inhumanity to man were coiled up, trying to rest if not to sleep. They gave little heed to John or to his condition. The only notice they gave him was to shout and jeer in various accents of human misery such phrases of bitter irony and sarcasm as only the wretched enjoy. One shouted: "Hello, there; another bloom for the chain gang bouquet." Others joined in the salute, saying: "So, there, you struck this old bob-tailed town for a crust!" "You ask for bread. They are generous; they give you a stone pile." "Nothing small about this town, you bet—thirty days, the least they give here."

"Shoel and hades aren't in it any more. They roast us down here; do us up brown, too!" "Hell has lost its grip; Christianity to the rescue!" "The devil wants recruits. Come in gentlemen; here is his recruiting office." "We are all drafted for the devil's army." "Stand by your colors, boys." "Here is a raw recruit for us to drill, but he'll be a veteran when we are through with him!"

They kept up their mocking, chaffing, jeering comments, which were neither reassuring nor of a laudatory nature. John was more than starving. He was dying of disgust and grief for fallen idols. He was heartsick and disappointed.

During the night his mind seemed to wander. He sometimes drifted off in stupors that were neither sleep nor utter unconsciousness. At other times he

would mutter words which seemed without rational meaning. Dynamite was a name which was most frequently on his lips. Some thought he might be a crazy nihilist, searching for victims of retaliation. Once he cried out in wild pathos: "Oh, if I could find my brother, my good brother, Hugh Martindale." Then he fell back against the wall like one fainting or dead.

Yet that cry was not uttered in vain. It was heeded on earth if not in high heaven. In that godless den of earthly torment there crouched another son of human woe and destitution. At the words "brother" and "Hugh Martindale" the figure started as though touched by a live wire. He crawled over by John and took his hand, feeling his pulse, rubbing, patting and chaffing his hands with the skill of a physician and the tenderness of motherhood. All night the unknown nurse held John's head and soothed his feverish frenzy. Through all his delirium John held his left arm pressed down over the old carpet bag, which was wrapped flat over his back, with the two handles coming in front of his right arm, where the bits of rope were tied from handles to and around the stiff, flat-lying bottom. Over the lashed-on satchel was buttoned his old coat, completely concealing the old carpet bag. John always lay on his left side, to make the old carpet bag doubly secure.

With the return of daylight John's illness increased. He was sinking fast. At times he would spring up with a wild, terrified start and glare around like one who sees snakes in the delirium tremens. His

inflamed eye rested for a moment on his attendant. He then muttered: "Yes, yes; I know it is he. No one but the Unterrified is so good and gentle." Reaching up his right arm to the Unterrified, he drew down his head and kissed his face lovingly, as a man kisses his mother. Nor was this the only wonder, for the Unterrified returned his kisses with tears of unutterable passion.

At length the hour came when the starvelings were ordered out to breakfast. John was again insensible, consequently could not walk out to meals. "Drunk," the marshal said, with official omniscience. John was left alone in the inclosure. The Unterrified asked for something to take in to the starving invalid, but, being himself nothing but another vagrant, was not permitted. Moreover, he was so watched and guarded that he was unable to smuggle any of his own rations. He tried, was detected, called a thief and ordered to return the morsel.

The solemn farce, rightly called a trial, we will omit, for reasons better guessed than told. Suffice, it was all that might be expected. The arbitrary sentence was announced with courtly dignity and legal severity. The twelve were each given thirty days in the county chain gang, or fined for not having money to patronize the city hotels and numerous feeding houses and sent to jail to work out this not very Christian way of feeding the hungry. But John's case was considered of unusual enormity, for he was given sixty days, being booked as both drunk and disorderly. Inasmuch as he was unconscious it did not

affect him what his sentence was. He was carried in and out in the arms of the ex-engineer.

To the court John's injured eye and swollen face were proof, strong as holy writ, that John was a drunken tough, if not a dissipated, youthful desperado. Certainly John's looks were not much in his favor. Neither were his clothes such as invite admiration, mercy or public sympathy. His crime was his rags, his rags their warrant; their warrant was his sentence; his sentence was the glory and shame of our merciless civilization.

All the thirteen unfortunates were tried, sentenced and delivered at Los Angeles before noon. Such is the speed of law, running in the destitute.

CHAPTER XV.

When the thirteen were turned over to the jailer at Los Angeles the Unterrified carried John in his arms, as a mother carries an infant. John was unconscious and apparently dying.

For some reason, unknown to those not deep in the secrets and mysteries of American politics, the jailer at Los Angeles was an honest, humane citizen. How, why or when a man like him was given an official position may long remain a wonder and a warning to other sham republics. It was an abnormal thing, a phenomenon, which under our methods may never again occur. Nevertheless the fact remains, like a mountain in a prairie, that an honest, clean-souled man was at the Los Angeles end of the hole. This fact was not generally known. Still, there were some who mistrusted and shook their heads with gloomy warnings and forebodings.

It was this jailer, suspected of humanity, who asked the Unterrified with evident concern what was the matter with the young man whom he carried in his arms. The incisive answer was both prompt and defiant: "Sir, he is dying of starvation. Look for yourself. See how emaciated; feel his pulse, or call a doctor. This is murder, social murder, plutocratic murder," and his eyes flashed and his voice choked

and faltered, while his firm, set teeth and clinched hands told of extreme human passion.

Instantly the jailer sent for a doctor, who came and decided it was a case of starvation, pure and simple. In a few moments he was feeding John broth, or soup, and bathing and dressing his injured face. However, he frequently shook his head, saying, briefly: "Bad case; bad case. You sent for me none to soon!"

Skill, zeal, everything known to science or suggested by humanity, was done then and there for the vagrant, John Martindale. Moreover, the dark, evil story lost none of its force and pathos coming from the burning lips of the Unterrified. He felt neither fear nor shame, reserve nor delicacy, in revealing all the revolting brutality lavished on the starving vagrants. The revelation was both strange and startling.

It was near three o'clock when John opened his eyes and looked around rationally. He recognized the Unterrified and said to him, faintly: "Where am I?"

"You are in Los Angeles, among friends, who will care for you. Don't worry. You have found your brother and he has found you," added the Unterrified, with gentleness.

"My brother!" exclaimed John, in a dazed, wondering voice. "Are you my brother, Hugh?" looking up at the Unterrified with the glow of love in his weak, injured eyes.

"Yes, Johnnie-girl-face; I am your brother, who harnessed the white rabbits for you and helped you

fill the wagon—the little rabbit cart, with clover heads."

"Oh, yes; you were always so good I ought to have known you from the first, but my fancy was so puffed up with vanity; I was looking for clothes and position, not for goodness or manhood. I am well punished for my silly ideal of manly worth."

Again he reached up his arms and drew Hugh down and kissed him. The poor, lonely pilgrim had found his brother. That they were together in jail for vagrancy or utter poverty did not make their meeting wholly without gladness.

When the first thrill of joy left John free to think he told his brother of his five hundred-dollar bills and of Lawyer Rush. The jailer was also strangely interested. He telephoned to the office of Judson Rush. He came without delay. He walked in, his massive form erect, his head thrown back, almost defiantly, hands thrust down deep in his pants pockets. He moved on and up with the stride of a conquering hero, saying, with an injured, indignant snort of righteous wrath: "So this is where I find you—the poet, the genius, the precocious apostle of social reform, the evangel of applied and primitive Christianity, the pilgrim of righteousness! I have been looking for your triumphant entry into our benighted midst for more than two months. Now I find you here—you, the boast and glory of Professor Broadmind—ragged and in prison! Great Jupiter Protector! But they have handled you without gloves.

Starving and in prison! We'll see about this," continued the lawyer, with colossal assurance.

"I have money," remarked John, in a vague, faint, thin voice. He then told the lawyer of the two bills and of the one held up in San Bernardino. He told all or most of the particulars. Rush asked to see the bill. Hugh felt down the vest pocket, took out the pin and passed the bill over to Rush, who looked at it closely, then offered to go out and get it changed. As it was after banking hours, he took it to other parties for examination and change. In half an hour he he returned and placed in John's passive hands twenty-five double eagles, saying, cheerfully: "Here's the gold. In a few days I'll go up and fetch you the other five hundred. In the meantime we'll get you out of this place." Still John gave no sign that he heard the words spoken by the lawyer.

Hugh gathered up the gold, tied it in a rag and put it in John's pocket, while the doctor whispered to Rush that John was worse—had a sort of relapse, was sinking fast, if not, indeed, dying.

All were unprepared for this sudden change. Rush was amazed if not incredulous. He looked at John's face. The whole expression was changed. There was a deathly pallor, a look of drawn, sunken collapse. There was dampness on his brow; his breath was short and quick; his eye glassy and roving. His hands and feet were cold. He picked at his covering. At times he hiccoughed and there was a rattling in his throat, as his cold breath came in short gasps.

At length he opened his eyes, looking around to

Hugh, saying: "Oh, I am so hungry! Give me a cookie and a cup of milk."

They gave him a cracker and a cup of white broth. He ate the cracker and drank the broth with relish, saying to Hugh: "Oh, that tastes good." Then there came over his face the death change. His eyes rolled back in his head. He gasped once and ceased to breathe.

As Hugh was holding him up in his arms, he could not see the change as soon as the others saw it.

"He has fainted!" exclaimed Lawyer Rush. "Lay him down flat. He will come to sooner in that position."

The doctor said slowly: "No; he has not fainted. He is dead. It is all over with him now."

Hugh laid down the limp, pulseless form and slipped his hand down over the heart to feel if there was any sensible action of that organ. There was no apparent motion.

Attorney Rush put his thumb and forefinger on the eyelids and pressed them down over the eyeball. Meanwhile the jailer brought a napkin to pin around the head to hold the jaw in proper position.

Hugh was so overcome by the shock that he almost lost his usual coolness and presence of mind.

The announcement of the physician was accepted by all as final. Even Hugh thought it was correct, as it was professional and therefore official.

Notwithstanding this Hugh could not refrain from efforts to resuscitate. He asked the others to help him, but they stood back, silently wondering at the

madness of Hugh in trying to bring life back to a corpse. Nevertheless he continued to work with faith and fury. The doctor looked on, incredulous, the jailer sorrowfully if not impatiently. Attorney Rush, standing with feet wide apart, hands in his pants pockets and cheeks puffed out, as if to blow out a candle, was the embodiment of doubt and wonder.

The Unterrified seemed to forget their existence. He had but one supreme thought. His whole mind and soul were concentrated on his work. He rubbed, patted, bathed and made many mysterious passes and motions. His very hands seemed endowed with life-giving powers, for the face of the corpse grew less ghastly, a slight flush came over the cheeks, the eyelids quivered and the lips moved and trembled. Then there was a slight gasp or two. The eyes opened and looked around with a rational, weary stare.

Hugh deftly removed the napkin which bound up the chin and fanned his brother gently with an old newspaper, saying, tenderly: "There, now, you feel better. I thought you would."

"Yes," whispered John faintly; "so much better," then closed his eyes as if utterly exhausted. The doctor stepped forward, felt the pulse, placed his hand over the heart. The action was normal.

The physician was more than astonished. He was confounded. He spoke to John and offered him a drink. John opened his eyes and said, faintly: "Where is my satchel? Here, put it under my left arm. Put it back so I can rest."

They put the old carpet bag back under his left

arm, the doctor remarking that such a support would relieve some strain, or internal injury, which he doubtless received in jumping from the car.

Furthermore, the doctor was consuming with interest and curiosity. The zeal of an investigator was upon him. He asked John if he had any remembrance or impressions while he was in the trance or unconscious state.

"Yes," answered John faintly; "I will tell you all as soon as I rest a little while."

Then the physician, with the enthusiasm of a student of nature, went over to Hugh, who was pale and bathed and dripping with perspiration, and asked what he had done and in what way or manner he had wrought this miracle, saying, with great earnestness: "This is a miracle, a veritable modern case of the dead coming back to life. It is more than resuscitation; it is absolute resurrection. I am baffled. Science is stultified. What did you do to him that he who was dead is now alive?"

"You saw with your own eyes all that was done. He has had these spells before; not quite so bad, maybe, yet similar. I guess he has a tapeworm, or something of that sort. These bad turns always come on when he eats after fasting too long. He will get better now. Poor Johnnie was always a wormy little chap!"

Hugh thought worms. The doctor thought miracles—the simple and the miraculous; the natural and the supernatural; the common and the marvelous.

As John opened his eye and looked around for Hugh, who came up and asked him if he could do

anything for him, he, smiling a weak, sickly smile, said: "It is so funny. I want to tell you my dream, or impressions, when I had that sinking spell. I thought I was dead and gently floating or drifting up and up and away. Sometimes it was like floating on billows that are not wet or watery. Sometimes it was as though we were flying on the bosom of the clouds. I had no pain, no fear, no effort; nothing real, but rest and joy, motion and music. I told those with me that I could not go away with them and leave my work on earth undone. They asked me my work and its object. I told them, for there seemed to be three with me, that I must bear the burdens of the weak, lighten the sorrows of the poor and cheated sons of toil. I must make the earth less hateful to the useful members of society. I must suffer more and sacrifice more for the starving poor and the sinful outcasts of earth. At this they halted and asked me what reward I expected for my labor among the poor and despised sons of earth. I answered: 'I expect poverty, obloquy, abuse, hatred, ignominy and the eternal enmity of those who live off the degradation of others. Then they asked me if I did not hope or desire other and better things for my earthly honor and comfort and I answered: 'No; nothing more nor better than was given to Him of Nazareth.'

"Then they consulted and said they would let me go back if I would tell them if I had not concealed some wish or motive for going back to earth. I told them there was one thing of which I had not spoken. I had to deliver a certain package to a man who had

not always been a good man. I wanted to go back, that he should not condemn all men because of my failing to make good a certain trust. Then they looked at me kindly, almost with sorrow, and said: 'Let him go back!' Then one who seemed the leader touched my heart with his hand, that I might feel the misery of the poor slaves of vice, as though bound with their bonds. Then he touched my hands, that I might work for them; he touched my head, that I might think, plan and reason for them, and lastly he touched my lips, that I might speak for them. After that I felt myself alone and sinking down, down, down, lower and lower, till I opened my eyes and was here in prison. Now, isn't that a funny dream?" said John, sadly.

Hugh, the doctor, the jailer and Judson Rush thought it something more and beyond "funny." The word "funny" did not in the least express their emotions.

"What was it you wanted to do; what trust or package to deliver?" asked Hugh, with some solicitude. "I may be able to help you."

"Yes; I will tell you some time, but I want Mr. Rush to write to-night to Arthur Arlington, Palace Hotel, San Francisco. Tell him to come here to Los Angeles to your office, for you will not know our address, and get his papers, which are all right. Tell him I am too sick to travel. In fact, tell him what you think best; only be sure and come or send a trusty person in his stead, as I am anxious to be relieved of my trust; something might happen to me."

He had Hugh take the card from the pocketbook for Lawyer Rush to inclose in his letter. The effort was great, for John sunk back fainting, yet soon revived in a weak, exhausted condition. They let him rest without further annoyance.

CHAPTER XVI.

Hugh was left with John for the night. Food, rest and his brother had wrought a great change in John Martindale. His face was less swollen and the pain had almost ceased. He rested well. He slept with the old carpet bag under his arm and with his right hand in that of his brother, Hugh.

In the morning the doctor came, with Lawyer Rush and the jailer. They had consulted long and from different standpoints. They all agreed on one question; that it was not right, proper nor expedient, under existing circumstances, to hold or detain the two sons of the famous Colonel Martindale longer for vagrancy, especially the younger, who had money and had not begged nor asked fraternal aid nor comfort within the borders of Los Angeles county. Although the elder brother might be held, yet it seemed wiser to let even him go free, although it might be a stretch if not a strain of statute authority. Inasmuch as mercy becomes the judge, so also does it become the municipality. This last humane and generous conclusion was reached after Lawyer Rush had eloquently if not menacingly dwelt on certain gross abuses, as well as the breach of constitutional civil rights, in the arrest, conviction and incarceration of John Martindale.

The jailer was a wise man as well as a just man; just to himself and to the city as well as just to John Martindale. He saw no good nor necessity in stirring up the mysteries and unventilated odors of the municipal bastile. Furthermore, there was a vigor in the hand and arm of Attorney Rush which portended a general commotion of things, with odors of surpassing unpleasantness. It was a case where prudence, mercy and discretion could act in harmony. The whole affair was quietly if not secretly arranged. Even the sharp-nosed reporters went by without detecting an item. It is thus that wise officials, by the direct use of whitewash, conceal the sulphurous fumes of our social gehenna.

Consequently John and Hugh were told their cases had been reversed, reconsidered, or re-somethinged, and it was thought that leniency and mercy were the better part of municipal justice. Therefore they were at liberty to depart, even the usual fine being omitted.

Attorney Rush sent a clerk from a clothing house, who measured the brothers with much haste and deftness. He went out, but soon returned, bearing a large bundle. Meanwhile a bath and a barber made the change of clothing like a metamorphosis.

Hugh looked in a mirror. He gave a loud whistle, saying, with a sheepish smile: "Gee whizz! Who am I?"

But John gave no heed to raiment. He was too sick and weak to think much of elegant looks or outward adornment. Still, he was not devoid of poetical love of beauty; but his swollen, disfigured face an-

noyed him even more than rags or soiled garments. He thought his worth, his manhood, was found and grounded within himself and not in his new, stylish dress.

As Hugh had carried John into jail so he brought him out. The only difference was in his thoughts and feelings. Now it was the joy of rescue; then it was the mad agony of carrying a dying brother into the dungeon of a Spanish inquisition. The brothers went with Lawyer Rush to a cheap but pleasant rooming house. They engaged a large furnished room for three dollars a week. To John and Hugh this cheaply furnished room was not only comfort but luxury itself, with its two large windows, its clean bed and cot, its dresser, table, rocking chairs and wardrobe. They had slept by the roadside, fence corners and under trees. Whosoever has been forced to accept the hospitality of these can bear witness to their incompleteness. Here and there were palms in the lawn and roses, carnations, geraniums, callas and an endless variety of beautiful vines.

John had the cot brought by the window, while Hugh piled up the pillows, that he might lie and look out the window down on the Eden below. He tried to forget some unpleasant things and hold his mind down to the beautiful trees, fruits and flowers. To him the whole earth began to seem beautiful and mankind merciful, generous and good, a sure sign that life is going well with us.

Hugh threw himself down on the bed, as if to make sure it was his by right and privilege. He remarked,

with a sigh of regret, that if he only had the Herald his happiness would be complete.

John handed him money, telling him to go out and buy papers, magazines and such things as they needed for use or comfort.

They were to board themselves, buy cooked food, live cheaply, but far better than the begging tramps—the children of the highways.

Hugh returned with his hands full of papers and a large market basket of supplies, together with two plates, two cups, two knives, forks and spoons.

They lunched happily, as little children playing at housekeeping. They were so grateful, so thankful, and the lunch seemed so delicious. They had each been obliged to beg the bread of tramps, which is seldom fresh or lavishly spread with good butter and jelly.

They were both chronically hungry, having fasted long and frequently. It was days and days before they ceased to be tormented with the greedy, ravenous longing for something more to eat.

Hugh appointed himself John's nurse and guardian. He was iron in his limit and range of diet, but John was too weak and contented to offer much resistance. Moreover, he loved, trusted and venerated this elder brother. Whatsoever Hugh said went without question. However, John's greedy eyes told what his tongue refused to make known.

In the evening Rush and the doctor called. The doctor brought washes and lotions for John's face, which was less swollen, though discolored and deeply

marked with red scratches. After telling Hugh how to dress the injured face he went away, leaving the lawyer alone with the brothers. He had an order for the five hundred dollars held in San Bernardino. John signed the order.

The lawyer was interested in the brothers. All that affected them appealed to his own heart. When John told him of Samuel Adams and his wretched, starving family he was not only sympathetic but promised to call and see them the next day. John gave him money to relieve their immediate wants, while the lawyer said he would go home and write it up for the Herald. But it was when the case of George and Jimmy was told him that his wrath burst forth. His words told the force, strength and vigor of the English language. Jimmy and George were to be looked after if money, telegraphs and American push could find them.

He showed John a telegram he had received from Arthur Arlington, which was simply that he could not come himself, but would send down an agent for the papers.

They talked long of social conditions, of the misery of the poor and unemployed. Their views and sympathies were harmonious. As Lawyer Rush rose to depart he turned to John and said: "Do you know any one by the name of Sunflower Darling?"

"Yes," replied John, with a face growing so red that even the scratches looked pale.

"Well, I had a letter from a person of that name telling of your probable death and making frantic

inquiries concerning you and your lost brother. I have not yet answered her letter. Shall I write to her or will you yourself write to her?"

"Give me her letter. I think I can write by to-morrow morning. I begin to feel strong and well."

Rush handed John the letter with a knowing smile. From that hour John improved rapidly. Perhaps love, hope and happiness aided and hastened his recovery. Who knows? Let them answer.

John told his brother much of his life, his studies, his writings and of his perilous pilgrimage across the plains. He withheld some items, such as the unsavory identity of Dynamite and his own feelings toward Sunflower Darling. These he avoided or omitted. Hugh was neither inquisitive nor supercritical. Whatever John was free to tell he heard without much interest or emotion. He was thinking of the future. John was living and thinking of the present.

To Hugh it did not seem remarkable that a stranger intrusted John with a large sum of money. The sons of Colonel Martindale were trustworthy. They were used to being trusted. It was their gift, talent and genius to be forever faithful. They accepted the faith of men, just as beautiful woman accepts the homage of men as their right and proper tribute.

CHAPTER XVII.

The third evening after leaving the jail Lawyer Rush called with the money from San Bernardino. He gave John the full amount in gold, much to his own satisfaction. He related in full his tilt and jousting with the bank officials. The marshal was there and enjoyed the whole affair amazingly. To think that a hungry, ragged tramp had money and, furtherfore, told the truth, was a phase of the tramp question seldom exploited. It was an unknown combination. It was like a new species—a thing without name. No wonder they were taken in on the wrong side of the law. Furthermore, they made a written apology, regretting that the son of their old friend, Colonel Martindale, had not made himself known, as it would, for the sake of old comrades, have been a pleasure to render service to the son of this valiant old colonel.

"I am shocked and disgusted!" exclaimed John in righteous indignation. "The son of Colonel Martindale is no more worthy of bread than any other suffering son of the Most High God. I was a-hungered, I was sick and they took me not in," sighed John sadly.

"Oh, yes; they tried to take you in, but you skipped

out," laughed Lawyer Rush, pleased at his revised version of "taking in" the hungry and ragged.

"Well, well," continued the attorney, "the poor and the unemployed are having a literal hell on earth. The white workers rival the black workers in poverty and political nothingness. Still, things are growing better. All evils to be removed or remedied must be first known, recognized and understood. Bigotry is less rampant and aggressive than formerly. The brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God are coming more to the front. Bigotry is losing its popular grip, but its arms are long, well-trained and tough. It dies hard. It gives many vigorous kicks and tries to get a new hold, a new cinch, on the people. But it is doomed, it is fated to fall in spite of its struggles. Things look encouraging. If they go on improving in a few thousand years earth may be quite a good place for a soul to come down and inhabit for a few brief years."

"It seems a long time for us to wait," remarked the Unterrified, dryly.

"Perhaps it is long, but I dare not shorten the time and raise false hopes," retorted Rush, musingly.

"Still, if we each do our best we may hasten the good time foretold by poet, sage and prophet," said John with youthful enthusiasm.

"It is rather hard to work and sweat for bread and clothes and keep up the lofty standard of working for the universal elevation of humanity. The hungry and ragged have other thoughts and other aims," remarked Rush, gloomily.

"That's where the Lilies of Solomon get in their blow," added Hugh with fierce vigor. "They take no heed of the morrow, what they shall eat or wherewithal they shall be clothed. They go in for the literal meaning of the whole thing," and Hugh laughed a cutting, mocking laugh that made John shiver.

"I went to see Samuel Adams," observed Rush, as if to change the current of thought. "I never thought or imagined such utter destitution, such meek starvation. God! If it was my children, starved to skin and bones; mere moving skeletons, encased in shriveled brown skin! The sight made me sick at my stomach. I carried them out a lot of supplies and a mess of cooked food; all I could stow away in the rig. Heavens! To see those skinny little skeletons snap their little hungry teeth into a chunk of stale bread was enough to make an angel weep.

"But I stirred up things when I got back to the station. I was loaded to the muzzle and I shot straight out into that well-dressed crowd. They looked frightened. I told them I was coming back in just one week and if they did not fix out that lot of starving babies before I returned they'd hear something drop. I told them to keep their eyes on the Times and Herald for the next few days as a sort of foretaste. I have written up the case for both papers. But next week, if things do not greatly improve and Adams find work, then I will give them a scorcher, a roast worth remembering. They all understand this."

"Did you talk with Adams himself?"

"Yes. He had on your shirtwaist shirt and pants

made from your blanket and looked almost human, but his wife and children! My God, they were naked! Nothing but groaning, weeping skeletons. It is a shame, a sin, an abomination in the sight of God and man!"

"I must hurry and get strong. I have so much to do my work seems to call out to me even in the night, so I cannot sleep or rest."

"You are weak and nervous," remarked Hugh. "You can't change this hard, old, selfish, greedy world. No one can. It is beyond hope or help—a gilded, gaudy mass of rottenness from center to circumference."

"You are discouraged. Take heart. John is going to try his hand at the business—the simple task of universal reform and social purification," laughed Rush in hopeful good humor.

"I will devote my life to this work. If I fail others will rise up and continue the work. It is God's work and it will be done, for he has promised it," said John, with the fervor and faith of a poet.

"Yes; you are right. This is your work. You were sent back from the dead to work out some plan of the Almighty's which we fail to understand. The professor wrote me you could write with a pen of fire, or flame, or some such hot stuff, so go ahead. Hurl your literary firebrands into the deadwood and rottenness of our social jungle and clear up the ground for the good seed of righteousness. Yes, yes; you came back to life for some good and wise purpose. You came back bringing a message of love and for-

bearance. You came back to be of some service to mankind, to sorrowing humanity, to the wretched, toiling, suffering Submerged Tenth. I believe this," said Rush, solemnly, "for you were dead as Lazarus, dead as a door nail, dead as an Egyptian mummy. Yet you were sent back to earth and to life for a purpose."

"Oh, it is grand to be chosen of God to work and to suffer," exclaimed John, with the zeal and faith of a martyr. "Hugh and Sunflower will help me in my great work of uplifting the weary and heavy-burdened."

"You can count me out on any such old, played-out game," sniffed Hugh, in utter disgust.

"He will help you, but not as a co-evangelist; but as a kind and loving brother, a domestic disciple, a man among men, and not a pearl before swine," added Rush, encouragingly.

"You bet, the Adventists are right. Nothing but fire, universal cremation, will purify this rotten old earth and reform the canting fools that run the job," asserted Hugh, hotly.

CHAPTR XVIII.

The evening of the fifth day the landlady knocked at their door, saying there was a gentleman in the parlor who wished to see John Martindale alone in his room.

"Who on earth can he be?" ejaculated Hugh in wonder.

"It is Dynamite," answered John, in joyful excitement. "I have been expecting him ever since Lawyer Rush wrote to him." Then, turning to the landlady, John told her to tell the gentleman to come up with Hugh, who would go down with her and show the visitor up to their room.

Hugh, who was quick to understand, went and led the old gentleman up to their door, which he threw open for the stranger, then discreetly turned and went out on the street, sauntering up and down, waiting but not watching.

The old gentleman was tall, yet much stooped, as though bent down with the weight of age. He walked with difficulty. His slow, shuffling steps were assisted by a cane. His beard was long and snow white, like his hoary locks. Yet he was dressed with prim niceness and old-style elegance. In fact, he was what society calls a "venerable party." Notwithstanding his dress and artistic acting, John stepped up to him and caught his hand, exclaiming with joyful accent:

"Oh, I am so glad you came. The money and the satchel are all right and ready for you."

Then the visitor spoke, in a weak, tremulous voice, speaking slowly and solemnly: "My erring young friend, you seem to take me for some acquaintance. I am merely an agent, sent by parties wholly unknown, to receive from you a trust which you were to deliver to the order or person of Arthur Arlington. I have the order."

"No use for an order. I deliver it to you, Dynamite; to you in person. If you wished to disguise yourself you better wear gloves instead of carrying them in your hand. I would know your hands sooner than your face," declared John, in tones of absolute certainty. "Come, take off your wig. Let me see yourself as you are and should be—a gentleman."

"So you know me, after all my fine make-up?"

"Yes; of course I do. Who else has such shapely hands, soft, smooth and hairless, like a woman's hand; so small and such perfect nails and tapering fingers?"

"Well, you are growing observing. My hands are the trade-mark of our family—gentlemen who do not work themselves, but make it up in working others. But, John, I am glad your face is not going to be scarred up and your cherub doll-face in the least marred."

Without seeming to notice the words of Dynamite, John handed him the old satchel, as though eager to be well rid of the whole affair. Dynamite took the old carpet bag, opened the false bottom and took out the bills, counting the packages, like one used to counting bank notes. He said, briefly: "All right.

I will carry this to my boarding house, then return and talk over some other minor matters."

He went out hurriedly, almost nervously. He was away less than five minutes and returned without the carpet bag. In fact, he went out where one of his brothers was watching the house to see if any treachery was going on around the place. The brother took the carpet bag and passed it on to the other brother.

Dynamite, when he returned to John, was almost like himself; less watchful, but more radiant and jovial. He questioned John about his journey. He seemed to ponder and look sad when he heard of the midnight slashing of the flour sack. He showed no resentment or desire for revenge, which somewhat astonished John, who was almost afraid to tell the whole terrible truth to one so reckless as Dynamite. Nevertheless he heard the whole without passion or angry comment. Yet the case of Samuel Adams and also of the two brothers, Jimmy and George, moved him almost to tears. He promised to look after the two wretched brothers and find them if money and enterprise counted for anything. Still, there seemed some restraint in the actions of the ex-safe-opener. He seemed ill at ease; not distrustful, but anxious. It annoyed him that John refused to take any more money from him. He seemed to think it was ungrateful not to enrich himself when he had an opportunity. The more he urged John the more emphatic grew his refusal.

At length Dynamite could hide his displeasure no longer. He blurted out pointedly: "Say, boy, who was that big fellow who led me up to your door?"

"Oh, that is my brother, Hugh Martindale. He was with us in the cattle car. You fellows called him the Unterrified."

"I thought as much," replied Dynamite with some concern.

"You need not fear him. He is a Lily of Solomon. Besides, I have not revealed your identity even to my brother. The past is past. The future cannot change or improve the dead past. Why should it try to wreak vengeance for vengeance' sake? I do not understand vengeance for the mere sake of punishment or revenge."

"That shows that you are not up in law or social methods. Do you ever intend to tell the Unterrified who and what I am, or rather have been?"

"No; never."

"Nor set the law hounds on my trail?"

"No; never."

"For your sake and for my sake I am glad to hear you say so. Now we understand each other as well as a saint can ever understand a repentant sinner. Now I feel that I can begin life anew. Now I can find ways to expiate my sins by doing good where I have been doing evil. I shall join the Salvation Army and use most of my money to help them found a colony for the poor and homeless."

So saying he bade John farewell, giving him his card to give Hugh, as he said he very much wanted to see him as soon as possible at his hotel. On the card was printed the name "Arthur Arlington." Beneath the name he wrote a few strange figures and signs.

CHAPTER XIX.

Three weeks had passed. John was able to take long walks. Hugh always went with him, as though he still thought him somewhat of an invalid. Hugh had a passion for riding on cars; even cable cars; horse cars were better than no cars. At his suggestion they went down to Redondo Beach, Long Beach and Santa Monica.

John paid everything. Still, Hugh seemed to have plenty of money of his own, which seemed strange to John, in his worldly simplicity. Hugh did not seem inclined to economize. He at times was almost lavish, wanting warm meals at good eating houses. John was troubled. Hugh refused to husband their means as much as John thought prudent. The one thousand dollars must last till John found some honest way to earn a living for both, as he wanted his brother to live with him. Not that Hugh was obstinate, but that John failed to impress his brother with his views of rigid domestic economy. Whenever John would say: "We cannot afford to ride so much on the street cars," then Hugh would say: "I can afford it; so come along. It is my treat. I will pay our fares."

This grieved and puzzled John, who was a good and prudent manager. John feared that Hugh would

again take to the highways if the day came when the thousand dollars was used up. It was this dread of losing Hugh which so depressed John.

At length Hugh observed that John was gloomy and secretly brooding over some imaginary trouble. He asked John what was going wrong; was he sick or expecting another letter of gushing slush from Sunflower Darling.

This stung John cruelly, just as Hugh intended. He meant to find out what was really the matter with his emotional brother. He succeeded better than he hoped or wished, for John unbosomed himself. He said: "Oh, Hugh, you mean to be good, kind and considerate, but we are spending money too fast. We cannot afford a warm meal every day, and then the car fare; that is too much. We cannot ride so much. We must retrench; cut down to bare necessities. One warm meal once a week is more than the poor, moneyless tramps get. Let us not be too self-indulgent. Let us be contented with this nice room, with bread, water, cheese, crackers, cold meat and sometimes cakes and pies."

"Look here, Johnnie, I have to make a little confession. I didn't mean to tell you for a long time. You are so queer about some things; but that Arthur Arlington of yours gave me, in trust for you, twenty thousand dollars in government three and four per cent bonds. Besides, he gave me a good little roll of bills, all for myself. The bonds are in the Los Angeles Safe Deposit. The money I have about me,

so you see we can have two warm meals a day if we like and no danger of bankruptcy."

"How could you take those bonds?" said John in reproachful sorrow.

"Easy as falling off a log. He said it was a kind of expiation. Now, when any one wants to expiate in that way I just say the Martindale family are agreeable, so long as the money holds out."

"Did he tell you anything more?"

"Yes; he said you were a babe, a fool, a suckling, so far as worldly wisdom and social methods were concerned."

"Poor old Dy——, Mr. Arlington. He meant to do me a kindness, but I am sorry you took the bonds. We may grow cold and proud like some other people."

"I will take the risk," laughed Hugh complacently. "I have slept out in the rain, without supper or breakfast next day, too many times to take on airs because I now have food and shelter."

"I suppose we will be forced to keep the bonds."

"I sincerely hope so," answered Hugh with emphasis.

"Hark! there is the postman's whistle. He gave an extra blow, as though there were many letters," exclaimed John, not without excitement.

Hugh ran downstairs and came back with three letters, one a large one, with two stamps. He gave the letters to John, who said, musingly: "One from Sunflower, one from Samuel Adams and the large one is from, I wonder who? Perhaps Dy—— No; Mr. Arlington. Here, brother, you read the one from

Samuel Adams. My eye is so weak I do not like to read such fine writing. Besides, I want you to know what he says."

Hugh opened the letter and read:

"Beloved and honored friend, John Martindale, tramp: We revere, adore and salute you. We are well; not only well, but well fed, well clothed and well housed, thanks to you and to Judson Rush, your friend and my benefactor. We have moved into a real house. The children have clothes. You should see the poor, hungry things eat. It is enough to make the rocks cry for pity. Those angels the King's Daughters are all you said and more. They found me work at Simons Brothers' brickyards. God bless the Simons Brothers! They not only give work but good, fair living wages. Sometimes I cannot realize my good fortune. I look at my wife, in a new, clean blue calico dress and think of that gunnysack skirt and shudder. But it is not to gloat over my own good fortune that I trouble you with this long, wandering letter. I remember those in the bonds of hunger and destitution as though still bound with them. It is for the poor, despised, hunted tramps that I write to you, knowing that you have felt their hunger and understand their helpless condition. I need not remind you of the cruel, unholy treatment which Christian society is pleased to heap upon the unprofitable tramping tourists. You know the tramp statutes of California. A constable arrests any walking stranger who is poorly clad and has no money to patronize lodging and eating houses. The constable receives

two dollars and a half for every such arrest. That is the legal fee and it is a poor day when the constable does not make one or more such arrests. Tramp-hunting is an affair of profit to the constable or deputies. They work the business for all there is in it. Then there is a fee to the judge who sentences and traveling fees for safe-conduct to jail; another fat job. Man-hunting, tramp-hunting, has become an active industry. Constables multiply and increase. They are arbitrary, absolute. They arrest the traveling tramps without writ or warrant, unless the ever-ready, all-embracing John Doe warrant is their authority. A constable told me in confidence that neither writ nor warrant was needed or used in arresting vagrants, tramps or hoboes; that such persons had no appeal and no redress.

"Shades of my departed namesake! Here is human rights, the rights of man, civil rights, with modern, Christian applications, with a vengeance. To send a tramp to jail costs the taxpayers seven dollars, at the lowest average. They pay this freely, willingly, rather than give a hungry man—God's child, their brother—a crust of bread or a 'cup of cold water'! This is called the higher civilization of Christian righteousness; Christianity, after nineteen hundred years of loving their neighbors as themselves! But it is not so much the tramps who suffer and are debased by such arbitrary arrests as it is the public itself. Inhumanity and injustice are thereby taught to the young, the rising generation. The jail, the rock pile, the chain gang are brutalizing. They harden the

beholder. They pollute the public more than they do the prisoners. This is the reflex action of all injustice and inhumanity. It is nature's own method of equality in all transgressions. It is the two-edged sword of eternal justice. It cuts both ways, him who wields and him who is smitten.

"As my namesake loved America and worked for her good and her glory, so would I if I could. In writing to you and Judson Rush I do the most I can in my limited way. If you can act or work in a broader field I am content to have the work done, whosoever may be the visible, active agent. God bless you, for a true, manly American.

"SAMUEL ADAMS.

"P. S.—My wife has named our youngest son after you—his name is John Martindale Adams. She held this letter up to the baby's lips for him to kiss the paper and send the kiss to you with his love and the love of the whole race of Adams."

When Hugh ceased reading he looked up at John critically, who remained thoughtful and silent, as one who accepts a holy, yet perilous, mission. Hugh reached over to John and touched the large letter, with two stamps on its soiled righthand corner. John bowed assent.

Hugh read: "Dear Unfledged Angel, Chick of a Cherub: I make haste to address you lest you find your wings and fly away to realms of outer space, to watch the good and evil done on earth by unwinged mortals. If you still are earthly enough to feel an interest in the affairs of common, plodding, sinning

mortals you may not then look upon my letter as an impertinence, nor upon my notes and comments as vain mouthings.

"Let this suffice for an opening. I went to see your ex-tramp, ex-suicide friend, Samuel Adams. Alas! I found others, more worthy, had been there before me. Notwithstanding this, he deigned to receive a few tokens of my good will and much-filled purse. I listened with some patience to songs, cantatas and oratorios—all in lofty strains of laudation of one John Martindale—tramp beggar and apostle of human brotherhood. I telegraphed on to find your 'George and Jimmy,' but without much encouragement. I went on to Phœnix, found the Darlings—nice lot of folks—enjoying a rampant and healthy poverty. I did them all the harm I could by removing the spur and goad of abject poverty and setting them up on the high-horse of wealth. Your Sunflower is a daisy. I gave her a pony and some gold to buy her wedding toggery. She blushed a fine color. You need not be jealous, but she did kiss me—my face, my hands and my trousers legs—so her big brother said.

"After having put the Darling family on a fair road to trouble and torment, I returned to Barstow, to go over the trail of 'George and Jimmy' to some purpose. Now when take a trail in real earnest it means business. I bought some horses, hired some cowboys and lit out. We followed the railroad track, making inquiries of section men and station agents. Many had seen George and Jimmy. They were everywhere

reported starving and suffering from thirst. They were often driven off from the track, but as often returned. The large brother seemed defiant and desperate. The invalid, meek and mournful. When last seen by the station agent the larger brother was carrying the other on his back. A section hand saw the athlete carrying the other thrown over his shoulder like a sack of corn. He thought he must be carrying a corpse, as he turned off up into a little valley and was lost to sight. This section hand said the brothers were both like skeletons—nothing but bones, covered with brown, parched, wrinkled skin. They looked more like ghostly specters than like live, moving men. I grew interested—excited, determined. We followed up the valley where they were last seen to leave the track. We rode up and down the valley looking, hunting and trailing. At length I saw an oblong, oval little wall that had a strange and suggestive form and structure. We went there; we found the brothers—thas is, their bodies. They had been dead many days.

"The invalid must have been dead when his brother carried his body over his shoulder up the valley. Apparently George intended to give the body decent burial. He had scooped out the dry, loose sand; made a shallow pit, which he walled around with stone. In this inclosed pit he had placed his brother's body. George then brought sand in a gunny sack and poured it over the thin, emaciated body of poor, patient Jimmy. The task must have been long and laborious for one so weak and dying of starvation.

But the saddest blot of this dark stain on the fair face of civilization remains a reproach forever. George, in emptying a sack of sand over the body, either fell within the stone wall from exhaustion or design. At least, he lay dead, over the sand-covered body of his brother. We examined the bodies. The brothers had died of starvation, thirst and utter despair. They were so thin and fleshless that neither buzzard nor coyote would deign to come near them. In fact, there was not enough flesh on their bones to make a scent, smell or odor. Their bodies were like dried bones wrapped in leather! We built the wall a little higher, brought a few more sacks of sand and rounded up their double grave. The cowboys made a few pointed remarks which would neither look nor sound well in a letter. I myself made no comment; I generously leave that part for yourself and your friend Rush—Jud Rush, the orator.

"You may want to hear something concerning my unworthy self. In health, I am well; in spirit, hopeful and happy. I have joined the Volunteers of America—the Salvation Army of Uncle Sam. You may be shocked and think I have no right to intrude among those who have never sinned as I have sinned. I joined to do good, receive good and keep good. I have bought 100,000 acres of land in Texas. We will found a colony of the unemployed poor. I have sketched out the whole scheme—they let me do this, as I furnish the land and the money for the whole enterprise. The Volunteers do the spiritual part and add character and dignity to the affair. I

furnish cash and they furnish confidence. The land is good; much will produce cotton; it can be tilled or used for grazing. There is both wood and water. My central idea is limitation. If it is right and expedient to limit the number of wives that one man can legally marry, much more is it right and expedient to limit the number of acres of land any one man can have, or possess, lawfully. To promote the general welfare—the greater good for the greater number—this limitation of land is absolutely necessary. Our charter will read that no one individual, within the colony, shall or can own but forty acres at one and the same time. This limitation knocks greed, cunning, covetousness and cupidity in the head. Of course, for a long time there will be common land, to be used for grazing and general purposes. I shall build a cheap house on each forty acres, fronting on long, wide streets. I shall furnish teams, cows, poultry, machinery, provisions and decent furniture. At the end of five years of continuous residence each head of a family will be given an absolute warranty deed of his homestead. Of course, there will be common, or general, buildings—schools, halls, libraries and all such improvements. I only give you the outline, with the central idea—limitation.

"I never was so happy in all my life. I begin to think life, after all, is really worth living. It may seem foolishness to you, but I seem to be walking on air, with my head up among the heavenly hosts. I have no fears nor troublesome torments. Men seem good or almost ready to become good. The sun, the

flowers, the whole face of nature grows lovable and glorious. I guess I better stop right here or you may think I am off my base. I can tell you, John Martindale, my boy, you are on the right track, on the warm trail. If mankind are ever saved from sin it will be by human goodness, human love and human brotherhood. God will not change. It is man who must change. Man who must love his brother man. You are right in working to promote love, unity and equality among God's earthly children. I may not see the grand consummation of this Brotherhood of Love, yet I am going henceforth to work in my own way to help on the good cause. That my heart is less given to sin I will give you one proof. I bear no hatred or desire to reek vengeance on Uncle Collis for cutting those holes in your flour sack, for I bailed him and Uncle Sam out of a Teaxs jail. They have left the state and I will have to pay the bonds. I may sometime visit you in your own home. I shall keep track of you—always. Write me at my new address—Gracchus, Texas; care Volunteers of America. Your most loving friend, ARTHUR ARLINGTON."

When Hugh ceased reading he looked up at John and said:

"A new recruit," then folded the letter and handed it over to John, who remained silent and thoughtful.

"Why don't you read that girl's, instead of sitting there like a marble statue?"

"I don't know. I feel queer. I think I am going to faint, or something. That about George and Jimmy

has taken all the hope and life out of my soul and body. Let me lie down on the cot. There, now, you may read Sunflower's letter to me and the spell may pass away."

Hugh understood that an instant change of his thoughts might drive away the faintness. He tore open the letter and read in a gentle, sympathetic voice, though much inclined to assume a far different tone. To him the letter was gushing, trivial and egotistic, but he loved John and made haste to turn his mind from thoughts of Jimmy and George. For this reason he waited for no invitation to read the letter from Sunflower Darling. He read:

"Dear Friend, John Martindale: You make a slight mistake when you address me 'Darling Sunflower'—my name is Sunflower Darling. I was awfully tempted to pay you off in your own coin and call you 'Darling Johnnie' at the head of this letter, as you always make such a muddle of my name at the beginning of all your letters. Still, I will forgive you, as you always seem to get my name in right position on the outside of the envelope.

"Happy is a mild, unmeaning word; I am wild with joy—shouting, singing; mad with rapture and delight. Oh, I am so happy! I cannot bear to sleep nights for fear I may forget my happiness and go to dreaming of our many calamities in dear old unfortunate Kansas. I sing from morning till night, much to the disgust of my big brothers; but my heart is so full of joy I just have to sing. I seem to sing in spite of myself. The earth is so beautiful and the

people so good. I wish I could live forever and ever. I am so happy I get up in the morning at three o'clock and call the others to get up, so that they may rejoice, be thankful and lose no time in sleep, with all our great happiness just running to waste. It is a pity not to enjoy every possible moment of such unheard-of blessings. I take great pleasure in counting over our many blessings and thanking God for each one as I count them off. This morning I counted off fifty-three great and wondefrul blessings that had been given us right here in Arizona. You may not believe it, but father and Jane said I left out more than I had counted.

"Oh, I forgot; I have not told you how, why and when this mighty flood of good things came to us. I suppose you guess—it all came through your good, kind and noble friend, Arthur Arlington. If there ever was a saint—an angel—a man going about making folks happy, that man is Arthur Arlington. God bless him and may his tribe increase. It is all so wonderful, so rare and unexpected that I am dazed; I pinch myself to see if I really am awake or just dreaming. It is so passing belief that I sometimes think it must be a miracle. This much I think I know: God put it in the heart of this grand and good man—Mr. Arlington—to do this loving, brotherly, generous thing for us. Oh, he looked so grand and glorious when he came in and handed poor father the deeds, all signed and made out. Poor father cried like a baby when he read the deeds and understeed all what it meant to us. I just threw myself down on the floor at Mr. Arlington's feet and hugged his knees

and kissed his hands—and those awful brothers of mine declared I kissed Mr. Arlington's trousers legs, but I don't believe them; anyhow, I cried worse than father did and so did Jane. The boys had to laugh to keep from crying too. George said we all made a 'holy show' of ourselves, if you know what kind of a show that is. I certainly do not. Anyway, Mr. Arlington understood, for he said his joy was greater than ours—and I believed him; so did Jane, for she was the first to speak and said in such a strange, far-away voice: 'Truly, it is—it must be—more blessed to give than to receive!'

"Then that miserable brother George had to laugh again. Why brothers see so much to laugh at in their sisters and so much to adore in other girls is a mystery to me. Mr. Arlington, that grand and good man, seemed transfigured there before my very eyes. He seemed to become an angel of light, with a smile like a benediction. His face was radiant—I saw it surrounded with light, like a sunburst, or halo. When I told our folks what I saw they looked incredulous, while George, that wicked tease, said it was all in my eye. I don't care whether they could see it or not, it was there all the same.

"Oh, you must come to Phœnix and see our grand place! The house was built by a wealthy Englishman for himself and family, but he was called back to England, so he sold the place near Phœnix—furniture, horses, carriages and a large cattle ranch and stock—sold all to Mr. Arlington, who had the deeds made out for father. We are now living in the grand house, amid luxury and splendor. Jane takes to the new

order of things better than any of the others. She says she always had a hankering for grandeur; but the boys say it is show business, learning to jab a little bit of potato with the dull tines of a silver fork, but I think of nothing in particular—it is the vast grand whole that fills my soul with joy. Now, father can read the papers, look off and enjoy the scenery, without worrying about future food and shelter. Father looks happy and contented, as all old men should.

"You must come. I have chosen the rooms for you and your brother. I am fixing, changing and arranging the things so as to be both beautiful and homelike. Jane just came in the room where I am writing to tell me to be sure and insist on your brother's coming to live with us. She says the great house will be lonely, if not gloomy, without you both. I wish you would come by the very first train that leaves Los Angeles. Why should you stay there? You have found your brother, now bring him here. We want him as well as yourself. I shall look for you every train until you come. I shall sit on the balcony and keep an eye on the street. I know you must come, because we all want you so much. Do come soon and not keep me sitting out on the balcony till I catch my death cold. Just grab up your things and come along. You can buy clothes here. My brothers bought ever so many suits, but they look best in riding—cowboy—suits, leggins, sweaters and sombreros. They are such fine horsemen—such elegant, graceful riders. The boys send word for you to come, and come at once. They want you and your brother to come, so as to go with them down to the cattle ranch and look over the

herd and go hunting or something equally interesting. You need not think you are intruding; all our good fortune came to us because we were good and friendly to you. Father says you must come and share the good luck you brought us. We, each and all, as one voice say: 'John Martindale, come! Come and bring your brother!' Yours most truly,

"SUNFLOWER DARLING."

When Hugh had finished reading the letter he looked at John critically, if not curiously. What he saw was enough to convince him that the die was cast, the thing settled, the invitation accepted and the packing about to begin. Still, he waited for John to speak, to say what was on his mind without aid or promptings. John also waited, hoping Hugh would say or do something to make the decision less embarrassing. Finally John said, with bashful insinuation: "Well, Hugh, what had we better do."

"Oh, pack up this very day and rush off to Arizona on the first train to-morrow," sniffed Hugh, with brotherly disgust and mockery. "Jane wants me to come; I am frantic; I can't hold myself, I am so eager to get there!"

"Don't be sarcastic. It is not like you, Hugh. I am sorry you don't want to go to-morrow, for I wish, so wish, we could go; but it shall be as you wish, as you say," sighed John in helpless resignation.

"You have spoken, brother John; enough said; we go, and go to-morrow morning," laughed Hugh, like one who accepts his fate with decent composure.

They went.

THE END.